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Salaha Ibrahim, a student at the Center for Girls' Education in northern Nigeria.
PHOTOGRAPH BY
ETINOSA YVONNE



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CUB SCOUTS

PHOTO BY SUZI ESZTERHAS

Award-winning photographer and author Suzi Eszterhas has established a successful career in the male-dominated world of wildlife photography—and she founded a non-profit, Girls Who Click, that teaches teenage girls the skills they need to follow in her footsteps. In this shot, cheetah cubs in Kenya rest under their mom while she searches for prey.

Check out a slideshow of Eszterhas's work: sc.org/eszterhas.



Time to Fix the Population Fixation

A COUPLE OF YEARS AGO, *Sierra* published a feature about Constance Okollet, a farmer in eastern Uganda who was leading her community's efforts to address climate change ("The Mobilizers," November/December 2017). With very few resources, she and other local women were planting trees, improving farming techniques, and developing sustainable businesses. After the story came out, some readers expressed dismay at our decision to profile Okollet. Why? Because she is the mother of seven children.

These readers were understandably worried about the increasing number of people on the planet and the burden it places on natural ecosystems. In their view, because Okollet had so many children, she was doing more harm than good. But the tendency of some environmentalists to blame individuals—in particular, women in developing countries—for the number of children they have is problematic.

This mind-set doesn't take into account the fact that wealthier nations with smaller populations produce more greenhouse gas emissions per capita than poorer nations with larger populations. The annual carbon footprint of the average US resident—if they own a car, eat meat, heat their home with fossil fuels, and/or fly somewhere for vacation—is significantly larger (as much as 15 times larger) than that of Okollet and her children combined.

Then there's the fact that millions of women around the world still don't have control over whether, when, or how often they become pregnant. That's a human rights travesty, and it's also bad for the environment. Pointing the finger at women for this is essentially blaming the victim.

The thinking of most demographers has evolved since the population-bomb mentality of the 1960s and '70s, when people feared that exploding numbers would lead to ecological collapse and famine. In 1994, feminists and population experts came together for a pivotal UN conference, during which they developed a framework for population policy centered on the rights of women and universal access to family planning. Studies show that education, economic opportunity, health care, and reproductive choice improve the lives of women and their families, which in turn helps communities; such gains are also good for the planet.

But myopic, outdated ideas continue to creep into public discourse about population. In their most extreme forms, they manifest in racist, xenophobic, and even violent ways. The killers behind the mass shootings in New Zealand and El Paso, Texas, referenced overpopulation and environmental degradation as reasons to target immigrants, many of whom are fleeing the devastating impacts of climate change in their home countries. Such eco-fascist rhetoric

has no place in the environmental movement.

We are publishing this themed issue on the intersection between gender equity and population with the hope of sparking a conversation that is better informed and also female-led—which is why we enlisted an all-women roster of writers, photographers, and illustrators.

Without a doubt, a growing population contributes to the ecological degradation of our planet. But the data on population trends is more nuanced than many environmentalists realize (see "Peak Baby Is Closer Than You Think," page 30). According to the United Nations, the human population will peak around 2100 at 10.9 billion, but the rate of growth is declining as women are having half as many children as they did just 50 years ago. Education, in particular, helps ensure that girls and women are able to make their own reproductive choices. On page 24, I report on how the Center for Girls' Education in northern Nigeria is helping impoverished girls develop a sense of agency—and, in the process, increasing their communities' resiliency in the face of climate change.

We can't take progress for granted. In "Mandatory Maternity" (page 42), Summer Brennan chronicles the Trump administration's efforts to restrict access to contraception here in the United States, while Karen J. Coates describes the human suffering caused by the administration's expansion of the "global gag rule," which withholds US financial assistance from any foreign organization that provides abortion services, referrals, or counseling ("Choke Hold on Contraception," page 18).

And no discussion about population is complete without considering the problem of overconsumption, which is why *Sierra* convened a panel of public intellectuals to discuss the interplay among wealth, inequality, and resource depletion. The panelists suggest that when we fixate on the problem of too many people, we overlook the outsized contribution of the wealthiest few to the climate crisis and the extinction emergency. As Katharine Wilkinson puts it, "some people are consuming wildly more and wildly differently than others."

As environmentalists, we need to strive for equity as passionately as we do for environmental sustainability, for the sake of human dignity as well as the long-term health of the planet. What might that look like? We are finding out the answer in real time with the global climate strikes, a movement led predominantly by teenage girls who, as they rally the world to address climate change, are grounding their activism in a call for justice. Around the world, young women are forging a path to a better future. Let's follow their lead. —**Wendy Becktold**, senior story editor

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Don't Drain Hetch Hetchy

I am disappointed by the travelogue "An Accidental Wilderness" in the September/October issue, which calls for O'Shaughnessy Dam to be torn down so that Hetch Hetchy Valley can be restored. What would it cost to accomplish this goal, since the dam is owned by the city and county of San Francisco and provides the city (along with 27 water agencies in Alameda, Santa Clara, and San Mateo Counties) with drinking water? The total cost of restoration would have to account for the cost of replacing this source of drinking water, along with the clean hydroelectric power generated by the dam.

Gary Kitahata

San Francisco, California

Keep Hetch Hetchy an Oasis of Calm

Publishing an article in a national magazine about finding solitude at a place within an easy drive of a major metropolitan area seems likely to set off a stampede. The resultant appearances on bucket lists, Facebook pages, and Instagram posts will just ruin the quiet the writer celebrates. For many people, traveling has become a source of pride. But transportation is now the number one source of greenhouse gas emissions in the United States, and many places are overrun with visitors. It's time to consider curbing our voracious appetites for seeing the next hot destination, before all those places have been loved to death.

Amy Houchen

Portland, Oregon

We Can Do Better Than Zombie Whack-a-Mole

Angelika Soriano's efforts to halt a proposed coal terminal in Oakland ("Zombies Versus Coal," September/October) are inspiring. But while it's important to fight each battle against the dirty-fuel industry, how do we win the war?

To make the necessary transition from dirty energy to clean energy, why not simply stop all construction of new fossil fuel infrastructure? We also need to stop the leasing of federal public lands for oil and gas extraction and end the vast subsidies for the fossil fuel industry, including rights of way for pipelines. And we have to enforce stiff fines and penalties whenever spills and leaks occur. We're

not going to win this fight one energy project at a time; we need to strike at the roots of the problem.

Anne Millbrooke

Bozeman, Montana

Please Stay on Topic

I've been a Sierra Club member since 1974 and a loyal reader of the magazine, and I especially enjoyed the past few issues. The September/October article about the American Prairie Reserve ("Building an American Serengeti") treated the opponents of the project with respect and provided a balanced and insightful overview of the rewilding controversy. The July/August cover story about the trash crisis ("You Can't Recycle Garbage") was the first article I have read on the topic that actually unpacked the crisis concerning the stream of plastic waste from the United States and the controversy over China's new approach.

I have always looked to *Sierra* for reliable environmental journalism. I'm not interested in coverage of social issues or displays of political correctness.

Bill Cook

Helena, Montana

What's Wrong With You People?

Your recent roundup of foldable gear ("Know When to Fold 'Em," September/October) included some jaw-dropping items. A \$2,700 bike? A \$1,900 paper canoe? A \$250 walking stick? Who do you think your readers are? Some of us don't live in New York City or San Francisco.

Paul Skiff

Benbrook, Texas

CORRECTIONS

In "This Land Is Our Land" (September/October), we mistakenly referred to the Nature Conservancy of Canada. The Canadian affiliate of the Nature Conservancy changed its name to Nature United. The doe pictured in "Building an American Serengeti" (September/October) is a mule deer, not a white-tailed deer. In "Know When to Fold 'Em" (September/October), we said that collapsible hiking poles can be tucked into a carry-on bag, but the TSA requires them to be packed with checked luggage.



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Dan Chu Executive Director

Women's Rules

Female leaders bring care and comfort as well as fierceness and fire

WHEN I WAS ELECTED PRESIDENT of the Sierra Club in 2017, I enjoyed an advantage not always available to women coming into positions of power: a line of women who had blazed a trail before me. Since the dawn of the 21st century, half of the Sierra Club's elected presidents have been women. The Sierra Club admitted women from its start, in 1892, and had a female president in the 1920s. Her name was Aurelia Harwood, and she was a courageous mountaineer who led outings into the Sierra Nevada for more than a dozen years; today, there's a peak named after her in the San Gabriel Mountains.

As a young woman, I was lucky to have incredible female role models. Fresh from college, I landed an internship with the Quaker UN Office as preparations were ramping up for the 1992 Earth Summit. I met women who were redefining the environmental and social justice movements—including Bella Abzug, who drew on her experience as a feminist lawyer and US representative to launch the Women's Environment and Development Organization, and Wangari Maathai, the Green Belt Movement leader and eventual Nobel Prize winner, who was empowering rural Kenyan women dealing with drought, food insecurity, and environmental devastation. They showed me what female leadership could look like.

It's hard to define precisely what makes women's leadership unique. After all, gender is a spectrum, not a binary, and we have to be careful about assigning essential characteristics to female leaders. Still, I think it's fair to say that most female leaders behave differently than male leaders. Women are frequently primary caregivers and tend to understand the importance of protecting and providing for others. Women also typically listen more and collaborate better. While it's important for us to grab the mic and march at the front of the protest, female leaders know—and have shown time and again—that we also need to amplify others' voices.

When Abzug and Maathai unapologetically demanded space from those who had historically monopolized power, they did so not just to grab power for themselves but also to share it with others. They carved out the room for other women to be powerful agents, to speak and act for themselves, their families, their communities, and our world.

Today, we are seeing a new generation of female leaders take the stage and take over the bullhorn. Some have become rock stars—like Green New Deal architect Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Swedish climate striker and youth leader Greta Thunberg. Countless more female leaders are working at the grassroots, doing so much righteous work and getting too little attention. But we need more women throughout the halls of power, from community centers to corporate and nonprofit boardrooms to executive offices and legislatures around the world.

The Sierra Club recognizes that we must do more to empower women within our organization and beyond, particularly young women of color. In May, our board approved a Multiyear Equity Plan that provides a road map for how we will center equity, justice, and inclusion in our work and elevate more voices. We are also partnering with groups like the Women's Earth Alliance (on an accelerator program for female



Female leaders know that we need to amplify others' voices.



grassroots environmentalists) and GirlTrek (supporting African American women to be change-makers in their communities by encouraging others to get walking).

There's no way of knowing where the up-and-coming leaders will end up. But no matter what, I'm convinced that they will lead in a way that balances vision and au-

thority with listening and nurturing, that brings as much care and comfort as fierceness and fire. As Abzug noted, "Women will change the nature of power rather than power changing the nature of women."

LOREN BLACKFORD is the 50th president of the Sierra Club. You can reach her at loren.blackford@sierraclub.org.

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Broad City's Ilana Glazer prefers to say "global burning" instead of "climate change."

Burn Notice

Comedy "kween" Ilana Glazer has a vision for a new world order

HOW DOES A "WOKE" MILLENNIAL STARING AT a rapidly heating planet find something to laugh about? The same way she finds the funny in patriarchal oppression.

Ilana Glazer, 32, is best known for the sitcom *Broad City*. She met co-creator and co-star Abbi Jacobson while taking improv classes at New York City's Upright Citizens Brigade. Eventually, the two teamed up to create a web series—a fictionalized ode to their friendship with its own lexicon. Then Amy Poehler signed on as executive producer, and Comedy Central picked up the zeitgeisty show.

The world of comedy isn't exactly known for empathy, but *Broad City* became beloved for foregrounding the complexities of white supremacy ("Sometimes you're so anti-racist that you're actually, like, really racist," Jacobson tells Glazer in season 3) and normalizing the experiences of queer, gender-nonconforming, and people-of-color characters. Off-screen, Glazer developed a cultlike following through her Instagram

account, which functions as something like a stoner's master class in social justice. Through her #generatorcollective project, Glazer encourages the pursuit of "minimal civic engagement" by interviewing activists and creating how-to livestreams of her own phone calls with senators.

"We all have a platform now," Glazer told *Sierra*. "I know Instagram and Facebook are evil, but I think real democracy is erupting in the form of social media." That's why she's used her own platform to show photos of melting glaciers and tout "the only 10-year challenge you fucking need to care about," and to hawk reusable water bottles and other recyclable merch advertising her new stand-up special, *The Planet Is Burning*. ("Lit'rally saving the world right now, guys," she's posted.)

Broad City, which helped turn "yas kween" into a catchphrase, came to a bittersweet end in March. Almost immediately, Glazer returned to live comedy. *The Planet Is Burning* sold out all 20 shows last summer and will stream

on Amazon Prime starting in January.

Before coming up with her material, covering everything from DivaCups and the alt-right to reasons why the future's *still* female, Glazer landed on her title. "I was like, 'Hello?'" The planet is literally on fire, but the people in charge act like it's not and that's insane and actually sums up the special's whole thesis."

If *The Planet Is Burning* sometimes relies on the tropes of classic stoner comedy, it's because Glazer likes to expound on the art of being a pothead slacker who can still take direct action to defend women's rights. While its star is outspoken about her preference for the phrase "global burning" over the milquetoast "climate change," the special is light on actual climate science. "It's too depressing and honestly doesn't make for good stand-up bits."

Glazer's humor leaves plenty of room for optimism, apocalyptic theses be damned. She shared with *Sierra* one gross joke that didn't make the final cut, likening the fraught state of America to a massive pimple. "It hurts and it's ugly and it's gross, but it's coming to a head right now, and that's necessary," Glazer explained. "It's why things feel so tense—that shit is *changing*."

While Glazer sees the future as female, she also thinks it should embody a partnership-based culture. "The power structure today is dominator culture—it's white-male-dominated and encompasses rape culture and slave culture," she said. "It's about taking resources from the many and distributing them to the few, which is why we've taken the system of science and raped it, held it hostage, used it for profit."

Glazer sees a natural marriage between science and comedy. "The big joke is that we have all these scientific resources, yet the majority of the system is ignoring them. The education system is terrible, yet every kid has an iPhone," she said. "And these complicated devices are changing how they're thinking, communicating, and building movements. I'm so ready for this next generation to trip out on the exciting trauma-healing possibilities literally at our fingertips." —Katie O'Reilly

Past Perfect

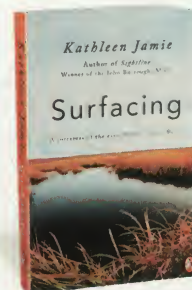
Can archaeology help us see the future?

There are plenty of books focusing on the challenges of ignoring the siren call of technology and living in the moment. *Surfacing* (Penguin Books, 2019) is something else—a smorgasbord of moments, slowly and carefully described. Kathleen Jamie, a Scottish poet and essayist with a taste for talking her way onto archaeological digs, joins a group excavating a 500-year-old Yupik village on the Alaskan coastline, then finds another group digging down through a 5,000-year-old Neolithic site on Westray Island in Scotland. At no point does the reader get the sense that Jamie has anything other than infinite time, attention, and patience for gently sifting through dirt and listening to people describe the orientation of lintels. Does she even have a smartphone?

The strangeness of the past and the future thread their way through the stories that Jamie tells—the Yupik site is being unearthed by a disrupted climate. "The frozen earth had held these objects fast, like charms in a Christmas cake," she writes, "but now the objects were falling to the seashore to be washed away for

good." On Westray, there is talk about an oil rig leaking nearby, about Scotland's boom in wind power, and about whether the Neolithic inhabitants were actually farmers or were wilder than they seem.

"Does this matter, is the question," Jamie writes. "Do we want to know how it was to be human, here, five thousand years ago? Do we want to know where we're coming from as we cruise into the future?" John Smith, a Yupik elder who often checks in on the Alaska dig, already knows the answer. "We gotta remember," he says. "If the planes stop flying, and no food comes in, we gotta remember how to live." —Heather Smith



After the Undoing

Terry Tempest Williams on surviving the erosion of land and life

"What if the survival of the fittest is the survival of compassion?" Terry Tempest Williams's newest collection of essays, *Erosion: Essays of Undoing* (Farrar, Straus, and Giroux; 2019), is a plea for a tender fierceness driven by the love of a disappearing world. Williams beckons us to a circle of testimonies in which "animals bear witness to a changing world, a changing climate." She writes, "The fate of the pronghorn is our own."

From the art installation of a circle of bones in "The Council of Pronghorn" to the haunting "The Questions Held by Owls," Williams measures the wealth of an industrialized Wyoming against a "sky of stars now noticeably obscured." In exchange for making possible 24-hours-a-day electricity to power our lights, gas and oil industries pollute the air and poison the water. The experiences of animals expose the threats of an altered Earth. Nonetheless, Williams avoids a habit of many environmental writers, who mourn the loss of nonhuman beings without acknowledging how human lives are inextricably

entwined with their fate.

Throughout, *Erosion* feels as intimate as a diary. "Every day, I feel the barrage of bullets I am trying to duck," Williams writes, "the hate speech coming out of the White House; the injustices perpetuated repeatedly against black people, brown people, and Native people; and the war being waged against wildlife and our public lands." The essays, including personal meditations on her brother's suicide, are a dance between despair and resistance, yet the call for compassion remains clear. —Jordan Keith





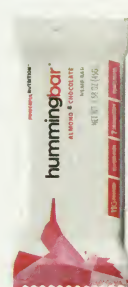
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Hemp Hype

In 2018, it became legal in the United States to grow and sell hemp—a nonpsychoactive relative of cannabis used to fuel cars and make bioplastics, clothes, food, and more. Hemp's long roots help reduce soil erosion and recycle plant nutrients, so the legislation was encouraging for regenerative-agriculture proponents seeking alternatives to industrial corn and soy. And hemp opened the door for “a lot of women in leadership roles,” says Elizabeth Hogan, cofounder—with musician Willie Nelson and his wife, Annie D’Angelo—of hemp company Willie’s Remedy. Here are five hempy, healthy eats from female-helmed businesses. —*Lela Nargi*



Chocolate Chaga Protein from Kauai-based **LAKA LIVING** blends antioxidant chaga and reishi mushrooms with vanilla, cacao, monk fruit, and hemp. Founder Liz Smithers sources from organic and non-GMO growers to create this amino-acid-rich, plant-powered powder—perfect for enhancing shakes, smoothies, and mochas. \$40 for 10.5 ounces, lakaliving.com



HUMMING HEMP products originate from 15 regenerative farms that rotate their crops, which naturally controls pests and prevents soil depletion. The company’s flaxseed-esque **Hummingbars** come in six flavors, including honey & cinnamon and almond & chocolate; the latter mellows hempseeds’ bitter bite nicely. \$25 for 12, thehumminggroup.com



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MORE ONLINE Meet hemp farmer Shani Coleman (pictured above): sc.org/coleman.



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Hey Mr. Green! Do you think it's time for a Ms. Green?

Q: Would you consider renaming your column? Surely you rely on female ingenuity sometimes. I suspect that such an evolution in the magazine would go over very well with women organizers and activists. —*Terry in Minneapolis, Minnesota*

A: Funny you should ask!

As many readers know, "Mr. Green" (a.k.a. Bob Schildgen) has answered your questions big and small for 15 years. I know I've learned so much from reading his column. As *Sierra* editors were planning for this special issue, they thought that maybe it was time to go in a different direction. "Ask Mr. Green" is now officially "Ask Ms. Green." Thanks to Bob, I have big, hemp, fair-trade shoes to fill.

By day, I cocreate laws and contracts and comanage SF Approved, a website I helped create for the San Francisco Department of the Environment that lists green products and services. By night, I get my hands dirty greening homes, events, and organizations and give talks on affordable housing and transportation. Late at night, I petition dictionary

publishers to be less sexist. And I answer your questions.

While all good things must come to an end, that makes room for new good things to be created. I am honored to be your Ms. Green—an Asian woman searching for unicorn solutions that can help us build a truly equitable, green world.

Talk nerdy to me at sc.org/ask-ms-green.

Q: I want to minimize the environmental impact of my period. Reusable pads seem to be similar to cloth diapers: The resource expenditure and waste generation for disposables is high, but the alternatives are also far from ecofriendly. Are reusable pads worth it? —*Julianne in Longmeadow, Massachusetts*

A: What's the greenest way to catch the crimson tide? Surprise! It's not single-use items. In 2015, the Ocean Conservancy collected 34,892 used tampons and applicators on beaches. No pads or tampons in the United States are labeled as certified compostable. Plus, imagine municipal facilities sorting compostable versus non-compostable ones (they don't). Many tampons have petroleum-based plastic wrap, and many name-brand menstrual pads have toxic chemicals that are likely absorbed through skin.

Luckily, what might be the greenest menstrual product is the most comfortable: period underwear that doesn't give you that everyone-knows-I'm-on-my-period look and feel. I wash mine with cold water that I collect in water dispensers while I wait for my shower to get warm.

I sleuthed around six swimwear and organic-period-underwear manufacturers to see how they measure up on worker rights and sustainability. Lunapads was the only company that replied, saying that its underwear is made from GOTS-certified organic yarns and many fabrics that are Oeko-Tex certified, and it has no diisocyanates, according to its US supplier of waterproof polyurethane lamination. —*Jessian Choy*

MORE ONLINE

Read a farewell message from the venerable "Mr. Green," Bob Schildgen: sc.org/schildgen.

More Online

A Taste of Nature

sc.org/daughter-nature

A mom teaches her young daughter to love nature, one bite at a time.

No Ordinary Rice

sc.org/wild-rice

Mines, pipelines, and warming temperatures are threatening a staple of Ojibwe identity.

The Heat Is On

sc.org/heat-waves

A string of hot days last summer points to how deadly the increase in heat waves could become if nothing is done to respond to the climate crisis.

A Federal Brain Drain

sc.org/blm-move

Critics say that the Trump administration's move to relocate the BLM and the USDA is a gambit to sell off public lands and force out career officials.

Inside Mount St. Helens's Crater

sc.org/st-helens

What does it look like inside Mount St. Helens? One hiker ventured to find out.

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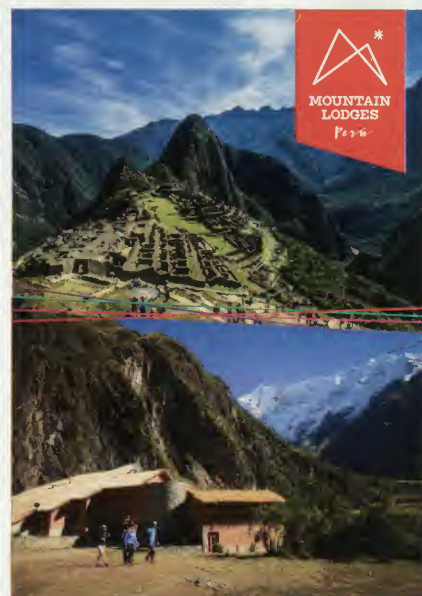
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The Mississippi Mound Trail links a number of massive earthen structures, vestiges of former Native American communities.

Mississippi Serendipity

MY FRIEND MELANIE AND I JOKE that the tobacco brought us to Winterville.

We'd started our road trip through the Mississippi Delta by following US Route 61, otherwise known as the Blues Highway, which leads past dozens of sites—from dance halls to cemeteries—associated with the creators of this distinctly African American music style. That's what most people come here to see.

As we drove through the low-lying delta landscape, dominated by cotton fields and dotted with hickory trees, occasional glimpses of towering earthen structures in the distance pliqued our curiosity.

After a bit of googling, we learned that the Blues Highway runs semi-parallel to the Mississippi Mound Trail and that along 350 miles lie more than 30 pyramid-like structures built by Indigenous Americans. These

impressive mounds are the remnants of entire cities: homes, places of worship, and burial grounds believed to have been built between 1500 BC and AD 1700 by the ancestors of the Natchez, Choctaw, and Chickasaw nations—Indigenous communities with roots on the delta. Although this area of the country is not commonly associated with Native American history and culture, there were once thriving communities here. The Grand Village site in Vicksburg was abuzz well into the 1700s, but its denizens, like those of neighboring mound-building societies, were eventually forced out by invading colonists. (Most of the mound dwellers' descendants were relocated to Oklahoma during the Trail of Tears forced marches, starting in 1831.)

The Mississippi Mound Trail is more of a road trip than a hiking experience—many of the structures are visible from Route 61 but are on private land and are not accessible without permission. However, four of them

are open to visitors. After lunch on the third day, we stopped to walk among the monuments at one such site: the Winterville Mounds, located just outside Greenville.

Mel, who had been trying to quit smoking, broke down and joined two gentlemen standing outside the on-site museum for a cigarette. They happened to be the staff archaeologist and a representative from the Winterville Mounds Association. They said that the area had originally been home to many more such raised communities, but the structures had been leveled to make way for plantations—a heartrending thing to process, particularly for me, as someone with both African and Choctaw ancestry.

It's hard to say whether it was this story or the land itself that gave Winterville such a solemn air. Though the site was separated from the road by only the small museum and

I touched the tobacco to my head and said a quiet prayer in memory of those who had lived there.

the parking lot, the area was silent other than the sounds of wind rustling the smattering of trees.

We wandered, mostly without speaking, along the trail that takes visitors through the center clearing between two of the remaining mounds. Mel, a musician, mused that she could sense the blues—the whole area felt steeped in that strange, almost comforting melancholy that blues so often invokes—and I could understand how that particular genre of music came to be born here.

The land also possesses a subtle undertone of defiance. The monuments on the Mississippi Mound Trail persist, despite all attempts to plow them under or ignore them out of existence—much like the descendants of the tribes that built them and those who worked the land against their will. Still here, still holding fast to important traditions, still making music out of adversity.

I was thinking of all this when I borrowed a cigarette from my friend and pulled out the tobacco. In some African and Native American traditions, tobacco is sacred and is used as an offering to the ancestors.



I didn't know if it was right or proper, but I decided to leave a little offering at the base of the largest mound at Winterville, where it's believed that the community held important religious and cultural ceremonies. On my knees in the grass before the overgrown steps, I touched the tobacco to my head and said a quiet prayer in memory of those who had lived here, those who endured, and those who were forgotten. It seemed significant in some way that I'd ended up here, in a place that so exemplified the struggles and the triumphs of both sides of my own family tree—and offering a little bit of tobacco was the best way I could think of to honor that feeling.

Weeks later, I received an email from Paul Hamel of the Winterville Mounds Association. He mentioned that only days after we had left the mounds, an elder, a descendant of those who had originally inhabited the space, arrived suddenly, in much the same way we had. He, too, smoked a cigarette with the two men outside the museum. He then climbed to the top of the largest mound and performed a ceremony, the likes of which hadn't, to anyone's knowledge, been performed in that spot for over 450 years.

It was hard to wrap my head around the story. Mel still jokes that my tiny gift prompted the site to call for someone who knew how to properly perform an offering. For me, the email raised more questions than it answered, but I was as deeply moved reading it as I was by my visit. —Lynn Brown

Take a Sierra Club trip to the South. For details, see sierraclub.org/adventure-travel.

WHERE The Mississippi Mound Trail, semi-parallel to US Route 61

GETTING THERE The best way to experience the trail is by car. It consists of 33 sites, from the Edgefield Mound near the Tennessee border and Lake Cormorant to the Smith Creek site near Woodville. Only Winterville, Grand Village, Pocahontas, and Emerald are open to the public.

MUST SEE Winterville has a museum that gives visitors an overview of the site's significance, its history, and the ongoing archaeological work being done, and Grand Village features a re-creation of traditional Natchez homes.

ETIQUETTE Remember that these sites are considered sacred by the Indigenous peoples of the area. Behave as you would in any religious space.

SIDE TRIP While you're in Mississippi, explore the legacy of the African American community that made this region an international music destination by visiting places like the Delta Blues Museum in nearby Clarksdale, the BB King Museum in Indianola, and the nightclubs of Farish Street in Jackson.

MORE bit.ly/mm-trail

Overbearing

TO EXPLORE MORE OF PENNSYLVANIA, MY THEN BOYFRIEND AND I DROVE TO LINN RUN STATE PARK, CHOSE A TRAILHEAD AT RANDOM, AND HEADED DOWN A LONG, LEAFY PATH THAT FOLLOWED A CREEK. —JACKIE SIZEMORE



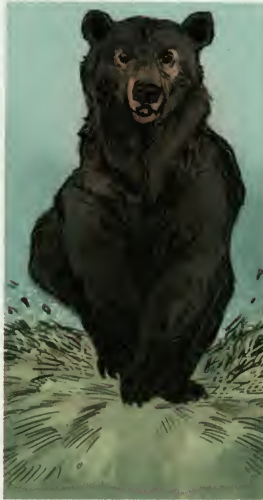
AFTER ABOUT AN HOUR, I SAW MOVEMENT AND REALIZED A BLACK BEAR WAS STANDING IN THE CREEK. I HID BEHIND SOME TREES.



I SIGNALLED TO MY BOYFRIEND TO JOIN ME, BUT HE WANTED TO GET A BETTER LOOK AND IGNORED ME.



I WAS MAD. I PULLED ON HIS ARM, BUT HE WOULDN'T BUDGE. THEN I SAW THAT THE BEAR HAD TWO CUBS. "WE HAVE TO GET OUT OF HERE," I SAID.



HE WASN'T GETTING IT. THE MOTHER BEAR LUNGED TOWARD US IN A FALSE CHARGE. I GRIPPED MY BOYFRIEND'S ARM, AND WE HELD OUR GROUND.



I WAITED UNTIL THE BEAR TURNED TO HER CUBS, THEN TOOK A DEEP BREATH. "RUN," I WHISPERED. I DIDN'T BOTHER LOOKING BEHIND ME.

Ask the Expert

Mark Ternent is a black bear biologist with the Pennsylvania Game Commission.

"When you encounter a black bear, it's best to make a little noise to let it know you're there, then give it some space by backing up. If the bear approaches, try to scare it away by yelling or waving your arms. Don't run, turn your back, climb a tree, play dead, or try to feed it. Be aggressive if you have to."

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protect

Brenda Akwero received an IUD at a Marie Stopes clinic in Parabongo, Uganda.

Choke Hold on Contraception

Trump's "global gag rule" takes away options for women who had few to begin with

IN RURAL UGANDA, GIRLS MARRY YOUNG, villages are far from clinics and hospitals, contraception is hard to get, and the babies come often. A quarter of women give birth by age 19, and half of all pregnancies are unintended.

But in some of the hardest-to-reach places, nurses and midwives arrive by truck, loaded with an array of contraceptives. They offer the women choices: Do they want babies? How many? How often?

"The average Ugandan woman has no say in when she has sex," says Carole Sekimpi, Uganda country director for Marie Stopes International, one of the world's leading family-planning organizations,

based in London. "Her husband comes home, and if he wants to have sex, she has sex." She may have no way to reach a clinic for condoms, pills, an implant, an IUD, or an injection. So Marie Stopes mobile teams go to meet her and other women beneath tents and trees or inside their homes.

If the teams don't come or don't come on time, there is trouble. Implants can't be removed when couples want a child, and short-term contraceptives run out. Marital discord, unplanned pregnancies, and an increase in unsafe abortions and maternal deaths follow.

That's exactly what happened—in Uganda and across the

ALEX POTTER



Ignoring women

In the 30 days after President Trump was elected, the use of IUDs and other long-lasting forms of contraception rose by 21.6 percent among US women with health insurance.

At least 16 women have accused Donald Trump of assault.

The State Department cuts references to women's reproductive rights and access to contraception from its annual report.

The Trump administration finalizes rules that make it easier for health care workers to refuse to offer birth control or other services that conflict with their moral or religious beliefs.

The Department of Labor wants to make it easier for employers to discriminate against LGBTQ workers, unmarried pregnant women, and others based on the employers' religious beliefs.

The Sierra Club's Environmental Law Program and others sue to reverse the Fish and Wildlife Service's attempts to weaken the Endangered Species Act.

The EPA will not ban chlorpyrifos, even though multiple studies have linked the pesticide to serious health problems in children.

EPA documents obtained by the Sierra Club expose the powerful influence of climate denialists on Trump administration policies, including the EPA's attempt to roll back auto fuel-economy rules.

The Club's Environmental Law Program blocks approval of the Atlantic Coast Pipeline; a federal court says the Fish and Wildlife Service "lost sight of its mandate" when it OK'd the project.

The Supreme Court rules against the ACLU and the Sierra Club, allowing President Trump to spend money not authorized by Congress on his border wall. —**Heather Smith**

Trump Watch is funded by the Sierra Club's Environmental Law Program (sc.org/law).

globe—after President Trump, on his first day in office, reinstated what's known as the global gag rule. First implemented by Ronald Reagan in 1984, it prohibits foreign organizations that receive US financial assistance from providing abortion services, referrals, counseling, or advocacy. Since then, it's been subject to political ping-pong: repealed under Democratic administrations and restored by every Republican president.

This time, Trump upped the ante. While previous iterations of the policy applied only to US family-planning funds, Trump's version applies to almost all US global health aid. Programs dealing with child nutrition, water and sanitation, and the prevention of HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria, and other infectious diseases are now subject to the gag rule. All told, this affects the recipients

"This policy is quite literally killing young women."

of \$8.8 billion in US aid. Organizations must weigh their options: take US dollars and comply with the gag rule or lose funding and face the closure of their clinics and programs—including those that have nothing to do with abortion. In March 2019, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo further interpreted the rule to include subcontractors and partner organizations working with any group receiving US health aid.

The effect of the gag rule, ironically, is to increase abortions and suffering. One study, published in the *Lancet*, followed three-quarters of a million women in 26 countries over 20 years and found that during previous impositions of the rule, abortions rose by 40 percent in the most affected regions.

Marie Stopes continues to offer abortion services, a policy that has left it with a \$50 million funding gap. Its Zimbabwe program had to halve its sites from 1,200 to 600; outreach teams in Uganda went from 35 to 30. The organization estimates that 1.4 million women and girls globally will lose Marie Stopes's services. By its calculations, that equates to 1.8 million unintended pregnancies, 600,000 unsafe abortions, and 4,600 avoidable maternal deaths.

Vanessa Rios, an International Women's

Health Coalition program officer and the author of a global assessment of Trump's gag rule, cites an example from a Kenyan clinic that complied with the policy and stopped referring clients to abortion services; two women subsequently died after unsafe abortions. "This policy is quite literally killing young women," she says.

Sekimpi and other aid workers also talk about a chilling effect that now permeates public discussions between compliant and noncompliant groups: "Many a time, you get to a point where the US government-funded people say, 'You know what? I think you guys need to stop this conversation here, or perhaps we need to step out of the room,'" Sekimpi says.

Beyond the human suffering, advocates say, the gag rule ultimately impedes everything from poverty reduction to environmental conservation—which depend on healthy women. Research shows that two of the top 10 most effective responses to climate change are investments in girls' education and voluntary family planning. "Combined, they reduce carbon emissions more than any other solution identified," says Seema Jalan, executive director of the UN Foundation Universal Access Project. "When girls and women are stripped of their right to control their reproduction, we are also grinding to a halt some of the most effective interventions against climate change."

Sekimpi sees one small positive to Trump's global gag rule: Her own organization, she says, has grown more frugal and efficient. "When you're in a difficult situation, you learn. You think better," she says. And it found other funders to fill some gaps. "When the US government grant ended, multiple donors came in, and we limped on for a while."

Aid groups are pinning their hopes on a more-long-term solution. Earlier this year, US lawmakers introduced the Global Health, Empowerment, and Rights Act (a.k.a. the Global HER Act), which, if passed, would permanently repeal the global gag rule and prevent future administrations from easily reimposing it via executive order. Of course, the bill's fate will depend on which party is in power after the 2020 election.

—**Karen J. Coates**

This article was funded by the Sierra Club's Gender, Equity, and Environment program (sierraclub.org/gender).

Up to Speed: Gender Equity Edition



After assuming for decades that only male birds sing, scientists are trying to figure out why so many **female birds sing too**.

Brain scans of over 200 adult humans of various ages find that **women's brains appear metabolically two to three years younger**, on average, than those of men the same age.

NASA renames the street in front of its headquarters Hidden Figures Way, to **honor the African American female mathematicians** who calculated the trajectories for the earliest US space missions.

Fewer than 1 percent of **US children's drawings of scientists** in the 1960s and '70s depicted females. Since then, the percentage has risen to 28.

Women are 73 percent more likely than men to be killed or seriously injured in a car crash. One possible culprit: a decades-long **shortage of crash test dummies with female proportions**.

Corporations in which women have more power in the top management team are statistically **less likely to be sued**.



NASA cancels the first all-women space walk after realizing it has only one appropriately sized space suit.



According to the United Nations, **four out of five people displaced by climate change are female**. Women are more vulnerable because they make up most of the world's poor and are more dependent on natural resources to support themselves and their children.

A remake of *The Lion King* **perpetuates scientific misinformation about lion culture**. Prides are led by, and are almost exclusively composed of, females. Males come and go, looking for prides that will accept them.

Clitarchus hookeri, a species of stick insect that migrated to the UK from New Zealand more than seven decades ago, has evolved into an **all-female matriarchy that reproduces asexually**.

More than 40 percent of women with full-time jobs in science either **leave the field or go part-time** after having their first child. Only 23 percent of scientist fathers do the same.

A study measuring the **effect of temperature on cognitive performance** finds that women do better on tests when the thermostat is set to a warmer temperature. The reverse is true for men. —**Heather Smith**



A survey of half a million heart attack patients in Florida finds that **female patients treated by male physicians** are less likely to survive than patients of either gender treated by female physicians.

MORE ONLINE For sources, visit sc.org/uts-sources.

The Trail Is Her Runway

And the backcountry is Instagram drag star Pattie Gonia's muse

IT ALL STARTED WITH A PAIR of six-inch-heel boots, stuffed into a backpack.

Wyn Wiley, a native of Lincoln, Nebraska, grew up camping with fellow Eagle Scouts. He also grew up queer, closeted, and unable to be himself—especially in the traditionally masculine world of outdoor adventure.

After coming out, graduating college, and becoming a commercial photographer, Wiley tried drag in early 2018, posting portraits of himself as Ginger Snap online. But the hate messages rolled in, and Wiley hid his signature boots in his closet. It was only on a backpacking trip with friends a few months later that he felt safe enough to bust them back out and then strut along the Continental Divide Trail.

Thus Wiley's "backcountry queen" alter ego, Pattie Gonia, was born. Wiley started posting photos and short videos of himself in character to Instagram, and the account quickly gained followers, striking a chord with an outdoor community hungry to transcend traditional bounds of gender and sexuality. Now, only a year later, Pattie Gonia has nearly 200,000 followers.

Pattie has captivated internet audiences by surfing in heels, staging an elaborate wedding (to herself) in Yosemite, upcycling outdoor gear into fabulous costumes (fanny-pack bra, anyone?), and delivering tongue-in-cheek PSAs against littering, toxic masculinity, and fast fashion. Wiley—who refers to himself using male pronouns and to Pattie with "she" and "her"—also makes cameos on Pattie's feed to share intimate real-life experiences, such as coming out as gay to his grandmother, and to dispense tips on being an LGBTQ ally.

Wiley, 27, hopes to get more people to live unapologetically. "I always imagine I'm posting to a queer, closeted 14-year-old like I used to be—someone who needed someone to be honest, to share where they were at," he told *Sierra* from Flaming Gorge, Utah (where he reported feeling "very welcomed by the name!").

At its core, @pattiegonia is an alfresco celebration of queerness and gender fluidity. "Through Pattie, I'm learning to love and accept myself for myself—the feminine me and the masculine me," Wiley said.

The homegrown persona is also a nod to Wiley's belief that, essentially, we're all just performing for one another. "When I put on my straight-passing outfits and lower my voice to drive across Nebraska because I don't want the looks, that's drag," he said. "When we put on our \$500 hiking outfits, that's us dressing in outdoorsy drag."

Wiley—along with fellow creatives who help art direct, costume, and photograph Pattie—isn't trekking in the backcountry just to flaunt Pattie's recycled-raincoat capes and platform Chacos. As an influencer, he's frequently approached by outdoor companies seeking to get gear in front of Pattie's many fans. What's Wiley's brand of Insta-capitalism? He prefers to highlight brands that agree to donate proffered gear to organizations working to expand access to the outdoors.

Recently, Wiley started organizing LGBTQ group hikes and cleanups with Pattie. "We're gonna do a whole Midwest tour in seemingly average spaces—neighborhood and state parks. Because not everyone lives with access to privileged outdoor spaces, and not every adventure has to be about conquering, about epic views."

"Through Pattie, I'm learning to love and accept myself for myself—the feminine me and the masculine me."



As Pattie recently posted after getting sick and cutting a backpacking trip short, "the finish line is for the ego; the journey is for the soul."

—Katie O'Reilly

Beautiful Water Speaks

Nicole Horseherder, executive director of Tó Nizhóní Ání

I'M DINÉ AND LIVE ON BLACK MESA in the Navajo Nation. Traditionally, our people were sheepherders and moved with the sheep to a new location when the seasons changed. When I was growing up in the 1980s, almost all the families had settled down to live in one place year-round. My grandmother was an exception. She was in her eighties but still really fit and taking care of the herd the way she was taught—bringing in the ram from the pasture in the late fall and taking him out in the early winter. The sheep spent the winter along the canyon cliffs so they would be sheltered from the wind and cold. In the summertime, my grandma would take them to high pastures.

My mom was an academic counselor in Tuba City, and I lived with her in town while I was in high school. But on weekends, I would drive an hour back to Black Mesa to be with my grandmother and the sheep. We lived in the traditional stacked-log homes that my grandfather had built at each location. There was no plumbing or electricity. My grandma would take the sheep to the windmill, which tapped shallow aquifers. We also got water from community wells or a spring.

But in 1998, when I returned as an adult to build my own home at Black Mesa, some of these places didn't have water anymore. In the late 1960s, the Peabody Coal Company started mining coal here. It operated two mines, Kayenta and Black Mesa. Kayenta supplied the nearby Navajo Generating Station, and Black Mesa supplied the Mohave Generating Station. The mining took billions of gallons of groundwater, using it to deliver coal to the power plant in the form of slurry. The water table dropped, and contaminants in the water increased.

Usually when a coal mine comes in, the people living nearby move out and are compensated. But here on the Navajo reservation, people continued to live in the coal-mining areas. Traditionally, our people live in matrilineal clan communities. In any one area, you have extended families all together, so you'd have to move a whole clan. But it's not like outside the reservation, where

people can pick up and go somewhere else—they are bound to the place where they live, and every corner of the nation is being used, and no one wants to move off grazing land. So a couple of thousand people live near the coal-mining operations and have been breathing coal dust 24 hours a day, seven days a week. They have to deal with the air pollution and exposure to toxics like mercury, selenium, arsenic, and lead.

Discovering that changed my life path. I had planned to teach at a local community college. Instead, I used my training to stop the mining by writing and community organizing under the elders' direction. In 2001, we formed an environmental group called Tó Nizhóní Ání (Beautiful Water Speaks). I serve as its executive director. We were able to shut down the Black Mesa mine and its slurry pipeline in 2005. The Kayenta mine still uses groundwater for its operations, but now it and the Navajo Generating Station are going to shut down, so we are focusing on what comes next.

I've submitted legislation to the tribal council that would rescind our energy policy and start exploring a transition to 100 percent renewable energy. In the future, I hope to see the Navajo Nation get off the electricity grid and use solar for individual or residential use as well as at a commercial scale. That's the way we need to start doing things, since it will take away our dependence on utilities.

What needs to be front and center for the energy policy is Diné fundamental law. This says that law is given by creation and emphasizes how to live on the lands we were given, how to be stewards of the land, and how to live in balance with the environment. This law was established long before we got colonial law, long before settlers came to this land and established laws for us. We have to use it to guide us into the future—we should have been using it all along. It will provide clear guidelines on how companies should do business with us and sustainability practices they must follow.

It's now time for us to bring about economic prosperity on our own terms. —adapted from an interview by Kristine Wong

MORE ONLINE Watch a video interview with Nicole Horseherder: sc.org/horseherder.

This article was funded by the Sierra Club's Beyond Coal campaign (beyondcoal.org).





NO GIRL LEFT BEHIND

**EDUCATING YOUNG
WOMEN MAY BE
NIGERIA'S BEST HOPE
FOR COPING WITH
CLIMATE CHANGE**

BY WENDY BECKTOLD
PHOTOS BY ETINOSA YVONNE



*I will hammer with one hammer!
I will hammer with one hammer!
All day long!
All day long!*

THE CALL-AND-RESPONSE IS ENTHUSIASTIC, rising above the sound of a fan whirring furiously in the corner of the room. About 50 women stand in a circle around the song leader, who pounds the air with an invisible hammer. When she gets to the second verse—"I will hammer with two hammers!"—she pumps both arms up and down, and the rest of the women follow. By the fourth verse, their feet have joined in, stomping the ground, and by the fifth, everyone is bobbing their head up and down too. As the song ends, the room erupts in laughter.

It's a typical day at the Center for Girls' Education. On this hot, breezeless afternoon in May, in the third week of Ramadan, most of the women are fasting, but their infectious energy gives no hint of this.

The Center for Girls' Education (CGE) is located in a plain, single-story building on the campus of Ahmadu Bello University, in the northern Nigerian city of Zaria. Its offices are sparse: a big table, a few desks, a couple of computers. For large meetings, everyone sits on mats on the floor. The concrete walls are bare, save for sheets of paper scrawled with motivational messages like "Work Hard, Have Fun, Make a Difference."

The purpose of today's meeting is to give some visitors an

A staff meeting at the Center for Girls' Education in Nigeria.

overview of the organization, and it began with the center's director, Habiba Mohammed, leading the staff in a "love clap" to make the visitors feel welcome: "[clap clap] Mmm, [clap clap] mmm, [clap clap] mmm, [clap clap] we love you." Then staff members take turns introducing themselves. When it's her turn, Mohammed says, "One thing I want you to remember about me is that I am still a girl."

At 50, Mohammed isn't exactly a girl, but with her friendly, open smile and generous laugh, she exudes youthful energy. Her statement seems meant to convey how closely she identifies with the girls CGE serves.

Over the past decade, CGE has helped thousands of impoverished adolescents in northern Nigeria stay in school or gain the skills they need to enroll. A joint program of the School of Public Health at UC Berkeley and the Population and Reproductive Health Initiative at Ahmadu Bello University, the center operates seven projects made possible by funding from institutions including the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the MacArthur Foundation, and the Malala Fund. Thanks to such philanthropy, the center is growing fast. In 2016, its Pathways to Choice project expanded beyond Kaduna State into two other northern states. Another project, the Adolescent Girls Initiative, aims to reach 30,000 girls in at least three more states by the end of the year through a partnership with the United Nations Population Fund.

"In Nigeria, we have 10.5 million out-of-school children," Mohammed says. "We are always hoping to help whoever wants to support girls, wherever that person is, even if we have to climb mountains or swim oceans."

Since its inception, the Center for Girls' Education has grown to a staff of about 70—nearly all of them Nigerian women, the majority of them Muslim, enabling the organization to fluently navigate northern Nigeria's culturally conservative, mostly Muslim, rural villages to promote girls' education. The organization's local connections have allowed it to shift cultural norms without violating them as it advances the health and well-being of women and girls, and by extension entire communities.

The center's success has broader implications too, as climate change starts to bear down on one of the world's most populous nations. A large body of research confirms that when girls are educated, their families and communities are more resilient in the face of weather-related disasters and better able to adapt to the effects of climate change. Educated women have more economic resources, their agricultural plots reap higher yields, and their families are better nourished.

Staff members don't tend to think about their efforts through the lens of climate change; nevertheless, they are helping to prepare the region to cope with, and try to avoid, the worst impacts of global warming.

during childbirth. Maternal mortality is a multifaceted problem, but early marriage has been shown to be a significant factor—globally, complications from pregnancy and childbirth are the leading cause of death for 15-to-19-year-old women. In the communities where Perlman was doing his research, the average age of marriage for females was about 15, and sometimes girls would marry as young as 12.

Perlman found that while most families considered keeping girls in school a viable alternative to marriage, few were willing or able to enroll their daughters past primary school. Nigeria's government-run schools are free except for registration fees and the cost of uniforms and supplies; for the poorest families, however, these expenses are prohibitive. The quality of education is also notoriously poor. One mother told Perlman that even though her daughter had graduated from secondary school, she didn't know how to read or write, and the mother had decided not to send her younger daughters. According to Perlman's research at the time, a quarter of the girls in the communities surrounding Zaria dropped out during the final years of primary school, compared with just 5 percent of boys. Of the girls who graduated from primary school, only a quarter went on to secondary school.

CGE set up its first program in the village of Dakace, a dusty collection of buildings inhabited by subsistence farmers and day laborers near Zaria. There, the center organized a handful of what it calls "safe spaces"—girls-only after-school clubs where 12-to-14-year-olds work with a mentor on reading, writing, math, and practical life skills. The hope was that with the extra support, girls would improve their academic performance at school, and families would be motivated to keep them enrolled, thus delaying marriage.

At first, the safe spaces were a hard sell. Mardhiyyah Abbas Mashi, an Islamic scholar and the chair of CGE's board, led the center's community-engagement efforts in Dakace. She met with the *sarki*—the village chief—and the local imam to enlist their support. A tall, elegant woman, Abbas speaks with calm authority. "As a teacher in Arabic and Islamic studies, and as a Hausa [the dominant ethnic group in northern Nigeria], I know the culture. I know the religion. So that is why we go to the community and we talk about the importance of girls' education in Islam," she says. "The very

**"WHEN A GIRL HAS
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IN THE COMMUNITY,
AND EVERYWHERE
SHE FINDS HERSELF."**

THE CENTER FOR GIRLS' EDUCATION was founded in 2007 by US medical anthropologist Daniel Perlman. Northern Nigeria has some of the highest rates of maternal mortality in the world, and Perlman had been conducting research in and around Zaria on ways to prevent women from dying



Center for Girls' Education director Habiba Mohammed acts out labor pains during a review of reproductive health.

first commandment that came to the Prophet was to read. In Islam, knowledge is compulsory for you whether you are a man or a woman."

The sarki and the imam agreed to the plan, but others in the community remained suspicious. Rumors flew: The real purpose of the safe spaces was probably to teach family planning, the point of which, everyone knew, was to get Muslim women to have fewer babies in order to reduce the Muslim population.

The sarki, Saidu Muazu, called a community meeting to address people's fears. "I made them understand that there are a lot of boys continuing with their education, but girls are not continuing," Muazu says, "and that when a girl has an education, she will make a better person in her home, in the community, and everywhere she finds herself." Eventually, a small group of parents agreed to enroll their daughters in the safe spaces.

Amina Yusuf was one of those girls. Despite having just finished primary school, she could barely recite the alphabet, let alone read a book. At the government-run primary school she had attended, she had been in classes with as many as 300 students. It was chaos. To maintain order, instructors would beat the students with sticks.

By the time Yusuf began attending a safe space at age 12, many of her friends were married. "I thought it was just a normal way of life," she says. But her mother had received some education as a girl, and her father thought she should as well.

The safe space was held three afternoons a week. Unlike Yusuf's teacher at school, the mentor knew her by name; if Yusuf didn't understand a lesson, the mentor followed up with her individually. Plus, the snacks were good.

Yusuf would come home from the safe space and teach her seven siblings what she had learned and also share tips

with her mother, like how to keep a clean kitchen so no one got sick. Her parents were impressed. In the past, her father had not paid much attention to her, but now he pointed her out to others, saying, "That's my daughter."

Mohammed was a mentor at one of the first safe spaces in Dakace. At the time, she was a teacher at a secondary school. Sometimes she had up to 90 students in a class, and she was also raising eight children. But in her first weeks as a mentor, she was taken aback by how difficult it was to work with the 15 12-year-olds in her safe space. They were unruly, and fights broke out, often for trivial reasons such as someone's hand accidentally brushing someone else's. "Whenever I came back home after my safe space, I had terrible headaches," Mohammed recalls. "I'd think, 'Should I continue this work? Am I really meant for it?'"

Mohammed had grown up in a family of three girls and one boy. Her mother had always encouraged her and her sisters to do their best. "In Nigeria, if you have a girl child, people tend to look down on you, thinking that you have not gotten a boy child that will carry the name of the family, but my mother always made us understand that a girl can do what a boy can do," Mohammed says. "Even when I was married and I was going to school, my mother was always there to support me, helping me in whatever way she could."

Thinking about this made Mohammed feel a deep responsibility to the girls in her care, despite the challenges of the work. She and the other mentors began meeting regularly to swap stories and advice, in essence forming a safe space for one another. Gradually, the girls' behavior began to improve.

Over time, the center's mentors, who are all volunteers, have gotten better at helping adolescent girls with little to no real education. They've incorporated movement, storytelling, and singing into their lessons to teach basic literacy and



Clockwise from left: A teen practices her numbers; Amina Yusuf; a lesson on puberty; and Zaria's increasingly dry landscape.

numeracy skills. It has been a quietly radical experiment, this refusal to give up on girls from the poorest families.

Maryam Albashir joined the program as a mentor in 2010 and is now a team leader for CGE's Transitions Out of School project. "One good thing about working with this center is you learn to accommodate everybody, whether or not you are of the same status, wherever you are from," she says. "We don't really have that in our schools in this country. You get spanked; you get punished. However the teachers want to treat you, they treat you. We were supposed to enroll about 30 girls in a school, but the principal rejected them, and her reason was that she didn't see people of their caliber coming into school. She didn't give them a chance; she just defined them."

In Dakace, Muazu says, there has been a big shift in attitudes toward girls' education. "People within the community started seeing the impact in the girls, so they got impressed. Right now, the number of girls who are in school is more than the number of boys because of the help from the center."

Girls who have graduated from the safe spaces frequently stay on and become what the center calls "cascading mentors." Now 22, Yusuf works on a CGE project called the Girls Campaign for Quality Education, which teaches girls how to advocate politically for better access to education. She is enrolled in college and is studying science education. She is not married. "I want to make sure that I marry a man who will allow me to continue my education," she says.

Perlman believes that the Center for Girls' Education is succeeding in its original goal of decreasing maternal mortality: According to his research, the age of marriage for girls who participate has been delayed by an average of 2.5 years. But even if this were not the case, he would deem the

program a success because of the way it has transformed the lives of girls like Yusuf. His data shows that 80 percent of the girls who went through the program in its first few years went on to graduate from secondary school. Now 70, Perlman still travels to Zaria frequently to collaborate with Mohammed and other staff members on program design and implementation. "Even old white men can be allies," he likes to say, "as long as they understand that the people who have the problem have the solution."

NIGERIA IS THE SEVENTH-MOST-POPULOUS nation in the world, with just over 200 million people living in an area roughly twice the size of California. And it's growing fast—Nigerian women have, on average, five children. By 2050, the country is projected to have the third-largest population, with more than 400 million people, the vast majority of whom will be under the age of 24. Tens of millions of young people will need education and employment opportunities along with basic services like sanitation and clean water. Without these, they will be mired in poverty and vulnerable to extremism in a country that already contends with Boko Haram and other terrorist groups.

Add to this list of challenges the impacts of climate change. Nigeria's northern border is perched on the edge of the Sahel, the semiarid belt that stretches across the southern rim of the Sahara Desert. By 2050, average temperatures in the Sahel could rise by as much as 2°C. Hotter temperatures will mean drier soil that retains less moisture, and this will make it harder to grow food, especially for subsistence farmers.

Yusuf Sani Ahmed, an agricultural expert at Ahmadu Bello University, says he already sees the signs of climate



change in Zaria. “The temperature can be 44 Celsius, which is high, and the streams are becoming drier and drier.” Because the water table is low, he says, there’s less vegetation, and livestock have become thin and malnourished.

Ahmed is on good terms with the herders whose cattle graze near his fields, but he says that shrinking arable land coupled with too much development is exacerbating conflicts between farmers and herders throughout the north; violent clashes are on the rise. “There’s less available land, and also not much is growing because things are drier,” he says. “It is so competitive.”

Girls’ education plays an indirect but crucial role in helping to alleviate these complex problems. The book *Drawdown*—a compendium of strategies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions—places girls’ education at number six on its list of the 100 most effective solutions to climate change. Aside from helping communities become more resilient, girls’ education has a significant effect on population growth. “Women with more years of education have fewer, healthier children and actively manage their reproductive health,” the *Drawdown* researchers say, noting that, on average, a woman with 12 years of schooling has four to five fewer children than a woman with no education.

In a report for the Brookings Institution, Christina Kwauk and Amanda Braga call girls’ education “one of the most overlooked yet formidable mechanisms for mitigating against weather-related catastrophes and adapting to the long-term effects of climate change.” But they also warn that fixating too much on population growth in low-income countries can be fraught with ethical problems. “For one,” they write, “it places the cost for reproductive decisions on girls and

women in the Global South while ignoring other anthropogenic factors that contribute to climate.” For example, the average American produces 16 tons of greenhouse gas emissions annually, while the average Nigerian emits only .55 tons.

Ultimately, improving girls’ access to education around the world helps address the strain that an increasing number of people places on fragile resources—for example, arable land and fresh water—in a way that advances basic human rights for women and girls. “If universal education for girls were achieved tomorrow,” Kwauk and Braga write, “the population in 2050 could be smaller by 1.5 billion people.”

*When I feel labor pains begin, I go to the hospital!
When I feel labor pains begin, I go to the hospital!*

HABIBA MOHAMMED STANDS before a group of about 20 girls in a dim room with mud-brick walls in the village of Marwa, not far from Dakace. She is a guest at today’s gathering, and she leads the girls in a call-and-response about going into labor and giving birth. While she sings, she trembles, grabs her back as if in pain, and doubles over. The girls imitate her gestures, their pink, red, blue, and green hijabs billowing.

This safe space began less than a year ago. The mentor, Khadijah Mohammed (no relation to Habiba), says that when they started, none of the girls could write their names. “Now they can write their names, the name of their community, their parents’ names, and so many other things,” she says. Most of these girls have never been enrolled in school; now they are preparing to take a placement exam to enter primary school.

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PEAK BABY IS CLOSER THAN YOU THINK

BY HEATHER SMITH

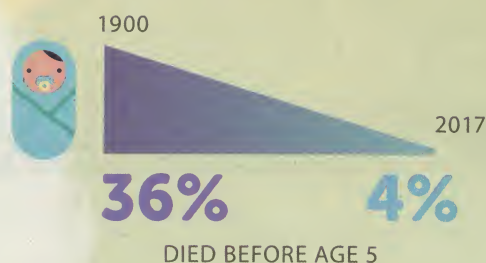
Research contributed by Mukta Patil

HUMANITY HAS UNDERGONE a remarkable shift since the end of the 19th century, when it was common for parents to live through the death of a child—often several children. As better nutrition and advances in medicine decreased child mortality rates, the global population grew swiftly. At the same time, in countries where women had access to education, good jobs, and birth control, the rate of growth began to decline. But in many parts of the world, access to education

GLOBAL FERTILITY HAS DROPPED

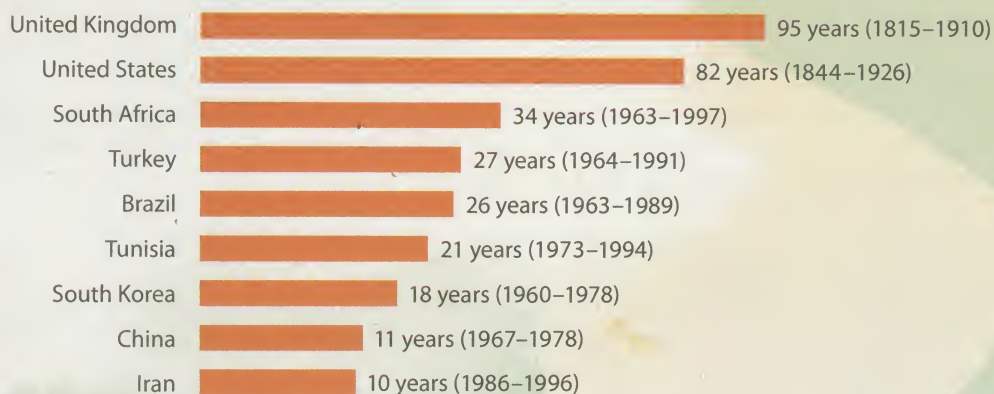


GLOBAL CHILD MORTALITY



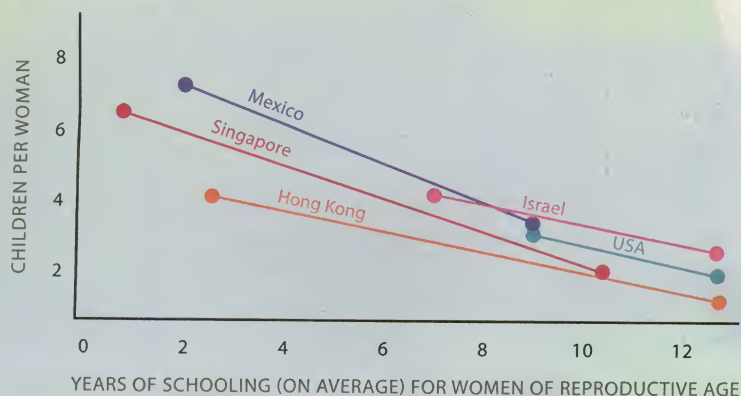
HOW LONG IT TOOK FOR BIRTH RATES TO FALL

FROM 6 TO 3 CHILDREN PER WOMAN



WOMEN'S EDUCATION & NUMBER OF CHILDREN

FROM 1950 TO 2010



In countries where nearly **100%** of girls go to middle or high school



In countries where less than **20%** of girls go to middle or high school



and contraception has been slow to arrive. Even in the United States, modern contraception was difficult to get before the 1960s.

Still, while the human population grew from 3 billion to 7.7 billion between 1960 and today, the rate of population growth halved—there are now more people, but they have fewer children. According to the United Nations, the human population will peak around 2100, at 10.9 billion, before leveling off, at 1.9 children per woman.

Some think that “peak child” could happen sooner, at 9 or 10 billion. In the coming decades, children will make up an increasingly smaller percentage of the population. Which means that as we face the unprecedented challenge of climate disruption, humans will be older—and, hopefully, wiser.

This article was funded by the Sierra Club's Gender, Equity, and Environment program (sierraclub.org/gender).

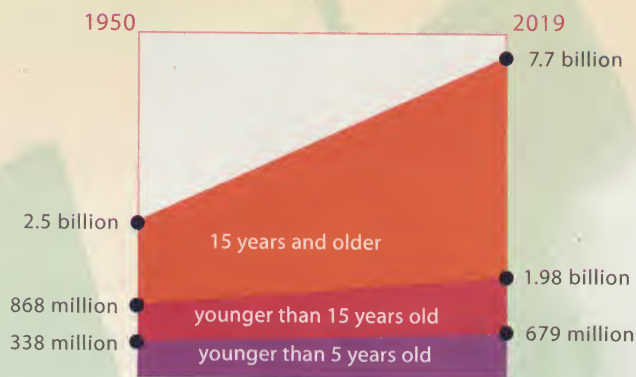
PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN WHO HAD A BABY BEFORE AGE 19



12%

OF WOMEN AROUND THE WORLD of reproductive age want to use birth control but don't have access to it.

POPULATION GROWTH BY AGE GROUP



A BRIEF HISTORY OF MODERN CONTRACEPTION



IUD

The IUD was invented in Germany in the early 1900s but didn't come into widespread use until the 1960s.



PILL

Invented in 1951 in Mexico City, the pill was approved by the FDA for “severe menstrual disorders” in 1957 and for birth control in 1960.



CONDOM

In use for centuries, condoms became more affordable in the late 1800s, when factories began to mass-produce rubber.

a woman has an average of



a woman has an average of





To Have or Not to Have

Dispatches from one millennial's uterus

By Katie O'Reilly | Illustration by Ellice Weaver



“You can’t be honest with yourself about what you want and think about the climate crisis at the same time—you might as well plant your feet in cement,”

therapist Ann Davidman tells me in her airy Oakland office. A sixty-something who bills herself as a baby-decision “clarity counselor,” Davidman has made a career out of using writing prompts and guided visualizations to help people like me figure out whether they want to have kids. I’m on her couch this sunny summer afternoon because, like increasing numbers of millennials and Generation Zers, I’m worried that if I procreate, I will contribute to melting ice caps, rising seas, and extreme weather. Worse, I might create brand-new victims of climate change—people who never asked to be part of this human-made mess. I’ve never been a hard yes or no on the baby question, and now that I’m 34, this indecision, not unlike my egg reserve, is getting old.

Complicating factors abound: I recently found myself single after ending a nearly decade-long relationship. For me, being back in the dating pool means spending long days at my day job chronicling all the planetary destruction, then going out afterward to meet dudes—potential fathers of the consumption machines I’m increasingly terrified to have—for drinks or hikes, during which I do my best to come off as a chill, carefree person who might be fun to reproduce with, *and soon*.. I need all the help this silver-haired clarity counselor can give me.

“This decision process is about figuring out what you want from the inside out, rather than in reaction to anything,” Davidman says. She cites cultural myths and misconceptions about having and not having children—for instance, that procreation guarantees someone will care for you as you age, that child-free life is all vacations and passion projects, and that if *you’re* smart and conscientious, then it might very well be *your* kid who finally solves the climate crisis.

I first heard the phrase *global warming* in 1992, when my

second-grade teacher in suburban Chicago solemnly predicted that Atlantic waters would rise above the spires of Disney World's Cinderella Castle within my lifetime. I came home and sobbed to my parents about it. But throughout the subsequent years I spent going to college, planning a career, and starting relationships, it didn't occur to me that the climate's tipping point might present itself during my own ovarian prime time. Before becoming an environmental journalist, I was only vaguely aware of how climate change worked. Upon the release of the sequel to Al Gore's *An Inconvenient Truth*, I had to shamefully admit to my coworkers that I'd never seen the original. Thanks to the election of President Donald Trump and the horrifying spate of hurricanes and wildfires in recent years, however, it's become impossible to ignore the fact that things are looking increasingly grim for my generation's offspring.

The October 2018 bombshell report from the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, with its dire warning that we have some 11 years to make the huge systemic changes necessary to save ourselves from ecological destruction, only compounded my reproductive anxiety. The UN's assessment in May predicting an "unprecedented" and "accelerating" decline in global biodiversity—alerting us all that more than a million animal and plant species are on track to go extinct within the next few decades—didn't help the existential spiral. How could I look my hypothetical child in the eye and acknowledge that I willingly brought them into a chaotic, increasingly uninhabitable world, that I knew all their favorite picture-book animals were going extinct?

A millennial journalist with a long professional and personal bucket list, I can picture myself living a fulfilled existence without procreating, and I respect that there are plenty of ways to parent without making children myself. And yet, I'm not immune to the biological imperative that's kept humankind going for 200,000-plus years. Moreover, I like kids. I grew up in a large, boisterous family and to some extent absorbed the notion that I'd someday replicate such a unit. So I'm feeling an acute sense of urgency. We've got as much time to ward off unlivable heat, flooding, famine, warfare, and human displacement as my reproductive system has, statistically, to make a baby.

"You can have children and work toward reversing climate change; you could *not* have them and make the planet a better or a worse place," Davidman points out toward the end of our session. Then she gives me an assignment from her workbook, *Motherhood: Is It for Me?* (coauthored with therapist Denise L. Carlini). I'm supposed to write down all the fears I associate with having children.

Later that evening, I settle onto the couch with a notebook. My dog, Maeve, snuggles up, and I consider the inexplicable joy this rescue mutt brings me—and how actual parenthood, I suspect, would redefine every superlative sense of love, pride, and responsibility I've ever experienced. Then I start writing. Once I get past the financial anxieties of being a student-loan-laden woman living in the Bay Area on a journalist's salary, I face the fact that I don't know how to cook, change diapers,

or enforce limits on screen time. I fill the next five pages with climate woes—including but not limited to whether it's fair to ask someone to grow up without elephants, bananas, or chocolate. "How is it moral to do anything but adopt?" I scribble onto lined, recycled paper. "Where did climate experts get that stat that having one fewer kid shrinks your footprint by 9,441 metric tons of carbon dioxide over an 80-year lifetime?" Doesn't that mean it's better to have a private jet than a baby?!

Finally, my pen runs out and Maeve's begging me to take her for a run. Before grabbing the leash, I stuff all that paper in a jar and, per Davidman's instructions, put it out of sight. "A fear is an 'external' in the sense that it stems from something that causes you to react—fears are variables you can explore *after* you reach clarity on your desire for children," she told me.

When Davidman started clarity counseling in 1991, her typical clients were professional women in their late thirties or early forties. About five years ago, though, clients in their early thirties started coming in with climate anxiety. Generally, Davidman finds that as she works with these clients, other anxieties emerge. "It's easier and more socially acceptable to say 'climate' than 'I'm really ambivalent about having children.'" Ambivalence, she says, may be the least acceptable response in a pronatalist society that equates motherhood with women's manifest destiny. "We often get judged and shamed for not knowing. But the climate argument shuts people right up."

This makes me wonder whether I'm pinning all my unresolved personal issues onto the poor climate. Last Thanksgiving, when I mentioned to my mother that global warming was giving my ovaries pause, she rolled her eyes and told me that if she'd taken the out du jour back in 1984—in the midst of Cold War nuclear tension—I wouldn't be here to navel-gaze about whether life is worth living without polar bears and autumn leaves.

Like the threat of nuclear annihilation, climate change demands a reckoning of everything we've been conditioned to believe about security and the future, but its fires, floods, and famines are already causing *existing* children to suffer. So try as I might, I can't see my reproductive anxiety as something to just sequester in a jar. I know that to some extent, my ambivalence is a privilege—unlike many women around the world, I have a choice about whether I have kids. Still, this doesn't make the decision easier.

Seeking another opinion, from someone closer to my age, I call up Blythe Pepino. Last March, the 33-year-old British artist and musician launched the fast-growing, UK-based BirthStrike movement, which provides a platform for people to publicize—through social media—how the ecological crisis is affecting their future plans. Pepino used to want kids and openly grieves her decision not to procreate. "People don't want to have to come to terms with the fact that the way they've been programmed to behave their whole lives has in many ways led to this almost suicide of the entire species," she says. "I think our society's actually going to collapse, and once I was honest with myself about that, I realized I didn't

I'm worried that if I procreate, I will contribute to melting ice caps, rising seas, and extreme weather.

want to have children and hide away like things were OK.”

Gradually, she began to realize that others felt the same way, and it dawned on her that the choice not to procreate might help thrust environmental concerns into the mainstream media. Now she is in the process of commissioning a London-based public art installation listing all 500-some BirthStrikers (women of childbearing age, mainly) by name, along with snippets of their testimonies.

Critics of Pepino's approach point out that corporate power structures got us into this mess, and not having kids won't get us out of it. They say that shoveling more guilt and shame for systemic, societal ills onto individuals, especially women—effectively expecting them to stave off the apocalypse with their uteri—detracts from holding the fossil fuel industry accountable.

Last winter, Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, 30, weighed in on the matter via Instagram. History's youngest-ever congresswoman paused while cooking dinner to wonder aloud whether it's “OK to still have children” in the age of climate change. Conservative backlash was swift—Fox News pundits called AOC's comments “fascistic” and reminiscent of China's one-child policy. But I interpreted her sentiment as more commiserative than political.

In March, a *Business Insider* poll found that 38 percent of Americans between 18 and 29 believe that a couple should factor climate change into reproductive decisions. The US birth rate hit a 32-year low last May. Perhaps thanks to student loan debt and wage deflation, along with inflated housing, health insurance, and childcare costs, millennials and Gen Zers don't subscribe to the notion that our lives will be better, more prosperous, and rife with opportunities as we age, which is part of why we're considering all sorts of factors before having kids. We have to figure out how monumental, multidimensional life choices like, say, moving across the country, deciding on a career, or having a baby will affect us (not to mention our families, partners, and society) today versus decades from now—on levels emotional, financial, and moral.

I've never been great at this kind of complicated emotional calculus. Sure, I've tried making lists of pros and cons to figure out whether I should move to another state, break up

with a boyfriend, or take a new job, but I've also learned to rely on my intuition to synthesize the many factors at play in any given decision and to look for guiding “signs.” That's how I picked out my college, my career, my dog. So far no epiphanies have arrived to help me decide whether I want to have a kid.

Then I fall off a mountain.

I'm on an early-morning trail run after staying up too late with friends—fellow freaked-out, child-free millennials—at Lake Tahoe. When I reach the summit of the nearest hill, I stop and take in the postcardlike vista of the sparkling alpine lake. I think about the privileged, unencumbered, and relatively carbon-intensive lifestyle that allows me to take spontaneous trips like this. (I never expected to be so unsettled, so single, in my mid-thirties, and it's become reflexive for me to adamantly appreciate just how great the great parts of my life are.)

Feeling sufficiently grateful to the universe, I eagerly start back toward the Airbnb where my friends are waiting with bagels and Bloody Marys, lose my footing on loose gravel, and tumble some 25 feet down a rocky slope. Slowly, I stand up. Save for some bad scrapes and bruises, I seem fine. “I should be running with Maeve,” I think. “I'd be a lot more careful.”

Maybe it is the physical pain that makes me miss my canine buddy so badly. But there's no denying that because Maeve depends on me and I adore her, I'm more responsible, more conscientious, in her presence. I care more. I want the world to be better (more trails! clean beaches!), and I want to keep myself in prime shape to help her make the most of it. I promise I'm not equating my dog to a human child—of course I'm not discussing environmental science with Maeve or thinking of her when I call my representatives in support of carbon taxes. But the joy of our shared outdoor adventures absolutely drives me to work to preserve the natural world.

Post-fall, I take a long look at my bloody, banged-up self in the mirror and consider how having a kid might motivate me to take better care of myself and others, to try harder, and to truly invest in saving us all from this climatic mess.

The next time we talk, Davidman points out that I should

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HOPE IN THE MULTITUDE

A conversation about capital, consumption, and population

How can we better understand the intersections of climate, consumption, and population, and what can they tell us about the future of a warming and more populated world?

Societies consume at different rates. Corporations drive consumption habits and help create a culture of commodification in which we identify as consumers—of goods, of services, of brands. Often, what we consume, when we buy, when we travel, and whether we use this product or that product are influenced by constructions of gender, race, and privilege created by those same corporations. We are what we consume; in turn, we consume what we are told we are.

How can we transcend our culture of consumption in order to embrace more ecological practices, as individuals and as a society overall? Sierra convened a panel of four experts—Katharine Wilkinson, Sherri Mitchell, Juliet

Schor, and Shahzeen Attari—to arrange the pieces of this complex puzzle into a clearer picture.

Katharine Wilkinson is the vice president of communication and engagement at Project Drawdown and was the senior writer of the New York Times best-selling book *Drawdown*. Sherri Mitchell teaches on issues of Indigenous rights, environmental justice, and spiritual change and is the author of *Sacred Instructions*. Juliet Schor is a sociology professor at Boston College and the author of *True Wealth*. Shahzeen Attari is an associate professor at the O'Neill School of Public and Environmental Affairs at Indiana University Bloomington and an Andrew Carnegie Fellow working on resource use and climate change.

The four gathered for a roundtable discussion this fall.

KATHARINE WILKINSON: The world is heating up. Climate impacts continue to unfold. Levels of consumption seem to be endlessly rising. The population continues to grow, as does wealth inequality. It's a lot, and it's entangled. We're going to try to unpack some of that, aiming for complexity and nuance but also clarity and simplicity. No small task.

Juliet, help us get started with some definitions. I find the root of the word *consumption* really fascinating: It's about using up. It's about wasting.

JULIET SCHOR: In the premodern era, there was an idea that consumption was a sort of wasting, of taking away, because there was more scarcity of

OPPOSITE: JEONGMEE YOON



SHAHZEEN ATTARI



SHERRI MITCHELL



JULIET SCHOR



KATHARINE WILKINSON

consumables in those days. It's not until the 20th century that you get the rise of mass production and use of the world's resources that lead to an explosion of consumer goods.

WILKINSON: Just how much of the earth are we currently using up year to year, and what are some of the impacts that's having?

SCHOR: You can look at what's called the eco-footprint measure, a consumption measure of how much of the earth's resources—biomass and so forth—we use on an annual basis. By early August, we used up what we have and went into overshoot—passing the point in the year in which we start to run down the ecosystem.

WILKINSON: Consumerism has only been with us relatively recently in human history. It seems to have had its roots in northwestern Europe in the 18th century. But it's clearly now a global phenomenon. How do you make sense of the spread and attraction of this consumer culture?

SHAHZEEN ATTARI: I grew up in Dubai. In the span of a somewhat short period of time, maybe 10 years or so, Dubai went from being a desert to a metropolis and a tourist hub. I got to see how a place that was far more natural at first became artificial very quickly.

Behavioral economists have shown that people want to consume more tomorrow than they do today. People want increasing wage profiles, and they want to make more than their peers. For example, if all of us worked in the same institution, we may want to make more money than everyone else. This is a deep psychological need that's very tightly wound to marketing and to the consumer culture. The question that I've been thinking about is, Are there ways to rethink our capitalism culture altogether? How can stories about alternatives help us reimagine our world? I think that's what a lot of people, especially in the climate change world, are starting to think about. We need to rethink how to untether consumption from growth, happiness, and satisfaction.

WILKINSON: Sherri, so much of your work is about looking to the past and to wisdom that's been held for many generations as a way to look to the future. I find that another interesting piece of the etymology resonates with your work: The word *consume* also means "to destroy by separating into parts which cannot be united."

SHERRI MITCHELL: I've been thinking about the fact that we see ourselves in one of two ways: We see ourselves as either a consumer or a commodity. The first product to enter into the trade market was the female body—in the form of land agreements that were negotiated through marriage. Women have been trained for the past 5,000 years to think about ourselves as commodities.

This issue of seeing ourselves as either a commodity or a consumer ties every bit of value that we assign to our lives to some type of consumption. When we think about the way

that we derive value from the aspects of our lives that define who we are—our relationships with other human beings, the ability to have safety and security within our own homes—the value that we assign to them has been tied in some way to commodification or consumption.

It's important not only to recognize the history of commodification of the human being as part of the consumptive market, but also to look at this inability to see our own value and the value of life beyond a capitalist system, beyond this consumptive market, and how that's impacting our ability to sustain our own lives on the planet. Human beings have been around for 200,000 years, but in the past 150 years, we've caused an equivalent amount of damage to Earth as was caused throughout the entire existence of our species.

ATTARI: I have felt exceptionally uncomfortable with the commodification of our information, so much so that in the past few months I've completely given up Facebook and LinkedIn. These platforms have started commodifying our information without the needed consent.

MITCHELL: It's really about extracting our lives from the marketplace and getting to know who we are, how we assign value, how we have denied our own truth. How we have hidden away the things that are most important to us in order to align ourselves with what's being promoted as most important within the popular culture. When you're single, people say that you are "on the market." Even the way we talk about these things is connected.

WILKINSON: I found it really shocking that our global use of materials is outpacing both population growth and economic growth. It feels to me like that is sort of the engine of spiritual desperation or something. Juliet, clearly we are overconsuming Earth, taking more than can be regenerated, generating more waste than can be metabolized by the living systems of the planet, but also clearly not all consumption is created equal. Some people are consuming wildly more and wildly differently than others.

SCHOR: Let me just start with a point about language. Even that language of "we are consuming," that royal "we," is pointing us in the wrong direction. Biology, economics—these are disciplines that have come at the problem in that way because they think about the average person. We need to depart from that and think about the fact that consumption is so unequally distributed, and impacts are so unequally distributed.

For example, 10 percent of the world's population is responsible for about 50 percent of greenhouse gas emissions, and about 60 percent of those people are in the Global North. The bottom half of the world's population is responsible for about 15 percent of emissions. So in that sense, it's not a "we" problem. In a way, I think this should make our problem easier, because it's less about whether everybody's behavior has to change massively. Yes, there's some of that, but really, it's a more potent approach if we focus on where those disproportionalities are.

"It's about extracting our lives from the marketplace and getting to know who we are, how we assign value, how we have denied our own truth."

MITCHELL: What we need to think about is how do we bring those who are the biggest power brokers on the planet to heel? We understand that these are the individuals who have been causing the greatest amount of harm. We understand that there are certain practices that have led to the most consumptive trends that we've seen on the planet, and they're certainly associated with extreme wealth. What ends up happening is that those in this top tier are consuming at really high rates, and they're making use of the most wasteful, inefficient, industrial machinery. Then the second-tier people are using that wasteful and inefficient machinery, and it keeps going down through these imaginary hierarchical lines.

It's not just a simple process of needing this group of people at the forefront of the destruction to have their own moral awakening about the harm that they're causing and the destruction to life that is resulting from that. You also have to deal with the emotional and spiritual illness that consumption has become on the planet and how it has become a measure of success.

WILKINSON: Shahzeen, how can we think about the dynamic of human population size and growth given these issues of inequity in wealth and consumption and carbon footprints?

ATTARI: I think focusing on population squarely does not take the entire picture into account. In the United States, we actually can see population growth declining over time. Even though our overall population is increasing, the growth rate has been falling over time, so that's actually a good trend, in my view. But I think focusing just squarely on population, especially when you have large population increases in the Global South, is not painting a fair picture.

WILKINSON: I think it is worth noting that in the process of moving the fundamental rights of women and girls forward—access to education, access to comprehensive voluntary reproductive health care—we see that women generally make the choice to have fewer children and to marry later. It turns out that the choices women make about their own lives also tend to be good for the overall human family and for the planet. Every woman should be able to decide if she wants to have children, when she wants to have children, and how many children she wants to have, and to be able to do that in a way that is safe and healthy.

Is reducing wealth inequality a fundamental climate solution? Is that one of the takeaways we can derive from that 10-percent-responsible-for-50-percent-of-impact sort of ratio?

ATTARI: Absolutely yes, because we're at the point now where we can't just be talking about mitigation alone. We have to start talking about adaptation, and we have to start talking about resilience. Resilience matters most not to the wealthiest but to the least wealthy among us, and decreasing income inequality directly helps in that regard. Unless we can find effective ways for the people who are the least wealthy among us to figure out how to adapt with the funds that they need, with the programs that they need, we're in an awful situation.

MITCHELL: I also believe that when we're dealing with inequality and we're looking at this incredible growth in

MORE ONLINE: Watch a video of Katharine Wilkinson, Sherri Mitchell, Juliet Schor, and Shahzeen Attari in conversation: sc.org/consumption.

income disparity—where the wealthy are getting wealthier and the poor are getting poorer—what it gives us is a distorted view of what the standard is. When you have people who are extremely wealthy believing that the standard of living for the average person is a \$250,000-a-year income, the standard that we need to survive, the standard that we believe in our minds we need to have in order to have enough becomes grossly distorted. We have a lot of teachings about what we call “the value of enough.” What is enough to be able to sustain our lives with a sense of dignity and a certain degree of safety?

That piece is really important, because the evidence doesn’t support the hypothesis that it’s simply a population-growth problem. There’s more evidence to support that it’s this growth and the disparity of income levels and the wealth gap that is creating a distorted view that people are striving toward, that’s driving consumption.

WILKINSON: When we talk about consumption, there’s sort of this implicit finger-pointing toward individuals, toward consumers. But of course, there is no consumption without production. There are no consumers without corporations. Where should we really be pointing the finger here, and how should we think about that sort of chicken-and-egg kind of problem?

SCHOR: The chicken-and-egg question is really interesting, because on the one hand, you can say it’s a system, every point in the system matters, and that’s true. But I’ve studied the relationship between consumption and system change for a long time, and one of the things that’s really important to understand is that consumers are not the leading agents of our system. They are much more—I don’t want to say passive, but they just go with the flow. They don’t have the power that drives the system. They adapt to what the production system is offering. The key point here is that the level or the scale of ecological and climate degradation is in large part driven by the scale of production. We produce, the money goes to people, all of the dynamics that we’ve been talking about are set into play by that flow of income.

But let’s not forget: It’s just a mere 100 companies that account for more than 70 percent of all the carbon pollution in the world. They are driving this. It’s those elites that are driving the system, not the ordinary person who’s just responding to a world that says consumption is what matters.

WILKINSON: I’ve been struck recently by how many folks even within the climate movement still very much buy into the economic story of “growth forever and ever amen.” It just seems like a pretty logical thing to think through: If the sources of economic growth are basically human capital and natural capital, and we know we are expending natural capital wildly and human capital is not infinite, how can growth even plausibly continue forever?

SCHOR: There is no question that the rapid growth of the past roughly 70 years, what they call the Great Acceleration, the

post-World War II period, has been monumentally devastating for the planet. It’s what put us into the Anthropocene, the era in which humans are actually changing the basic chemistry of the planet. One of the things that’s happened is that growth used to be something that you could plausibly argue was pretty much good for everyone, especially those people at the bottom. In the couple of decades after World War II, growth led to more equality and lifted people up. Beginning around the 1980s, growth starts to do the opposite. Growth is what’s creating more inequality, and of course all of that growth is ecologically very destructive. We’re still trapped in the view that growth is going to solve our problems. That view is decades out-of-date.

One of the most interesting things about the way politics in the United States has changed, the way it’s changing in some other places too—the Green New Deal is a great example of this—is that it is no longer so growth-centric. It’s saying, “OK, what do human beings need? We need education, we need health care, we need security, we need housing, we need a clean environment, we need a safe climate.” The Green New Deal does not say, “Let’s gin up the economy and hope that a rising tide lifts all boats or people will get jobs.” It says, “We’re going to give them jobs, and we’re going to give them decent wages.” Moving from a growth-centric approach to, let’s call it a need-centric or human-centric approach, is really important.

ATTARI: People collectively are far more powerful than they realize, and we’re starting to see that in action, with both the Sunrise Movement right now and with the excitement around the Green New Deal. A lot of my own work looks at how individual behavior facilitates changes in policy support, and what we found is that people really want to know what they can do to make a difference. For example, a lot of climate change scientists and researchers have a very large carbon footprint because we fly a lot. In terms of my own total carbon footprint, flying dominates all sectors. We experimentally tested how having different carbon footprints affects credibility and policy support. People have much stronger policy support when the communicator, the climate communicator, has a smaller footprint than if the communicator has a larger footprint.

People want to see how to be the change, how to dream of this new future, and they’re willing to come along. I’m really interested in unleashing the power of narrative, the power of collective action, as opposed to just looking at individual behavior or a simple policy instrument.

MITCHELL: We have to be able and willing to change our thinking about certain entrenched beliefs that we have adopted throughout the entire era of this colonial, patriarchal, capitalistic system.

One of those beliefs is that someone else will come and solve the problem. Entrenched in patriarchy, entrenched in colonialism, is this notion of childlike dependence. That means that we settle for the solutions that are offered to us. We have an illusion of choice. We need to start taking

"There will have to be less flying. There will have to be less Ubering. There will have to be less red-meat eating, less wasting of food, less buying of things that we don't really need."

responsibility for the state of our world by moving beyond this childlike dependence, moving beyond this binary thinking, recognizing that it's going to be a whole number of smaller, localized communal initiatives that are going to actually move us in the direction that we want to go in.

It's really a radical change in thinking; it's about us being able to break out of the reservation of the mind and start breaking free from these illusions that we've been fed and bought wholesale, and freeing ourselves to think more creatively and more critically about the systems that we've developed collectively.

WILKINSON: Where do you all think we're seeing footholds? Where are we seeing things in motion that may give us a glimpse into what's possible for the future? There's a lot to feel pretty bleak about in this moment, but surely there are some bright spots that we might look to and learn from.

MITCHELL: I think that the most hopeful thing that I have seen is a real willingness from younger people to forgo the status quo. They are not only willing but also desiring to live with much less. They're moving away from the pathway that others have always told them was the pathway to success.

ATTARI: What I found very hopeful and inspiring is the youth movement around climate change. I think that in itself is really powerful. My students are becoming much more politically active. We just had a student run for city council because he wants climate change to be a front agenda item for Bloomington, Indiana. What else I find exciting is that there's a growing feminist movement around climate change. More women in the fields of arts, science, activism, and journalism are pushing the boundaries and trying to take back the conversation and trying to own parts of the solution that have in the past not been ours. I find hope in this multitude of actions and voices.

SCHOR: In the last year or so, the resistance to the fossil fuel industry and to our dependence on a destructive way of life has really exploded. We've been talking about the Sunrise Movement and young people, but it's bigger than that. I think that both industry and politicians—and everyone associated with the status quo trying to prevent serious action on climate—are on the defensive. We're winning lawsuits; industry is losing in court. It is now common sense that we are going to get off fossil fuels. That was unthinkable even five years ago. I don't know if we're going to be able to expand and become powerful enough in this period of

time to allow us to avoid some of the really horrific things that we're facing. But we're in a much better position than we were five years ago.

MITCHELL: There is now international recognition that the protection of Indigenous lands is synonymous with the protection of the planet. People understanding that shows me that there's a real cultural shift away from the ways of thinking that have led us to where we are, and that we're moving back toward a more harmonious and balanced relationship with not only the earth but also the peoples of the earth. To me, that's very encouraging as well.

WILKINSON: Journalist Emily Atkin has done some great writing about this nexus of climate crisis and consumer culture and being honest about the thing that people sometimes don't want to say, which is that there will be individual "sacrifice" in this, for those of us in a higher-consuming culture or higher socioeconomic status. There will have to be less flying. There will have to be less Ubering. There will have to be less red-meat eating, less wasting of food, less buying of things that we don't really need. But in that "sacrifice," we may actually find that it is not a sacrifice at all. That in some ways the planet may be forcing us into a kind of emotional, psychological, spiritual evolution simply out of necessity and a sense of limits.

Are there action steps you might leave folks with to help them make personal and systemic changes?

MITCHELL: I think that the action step is to start looking at the ways that you have commodified your individual being in your life, and how you can start moving back toward wholeness. The planet is forcing us back into relationship with the source of our life. If we're less able to engage in all of these forms of escapism, which the majority of our life has become, then we're going to be forced to move into a deeper relationship with the people in our community.

WILKINSON: There's been so much talk recently about climate grief or climate anxiety. Pick your hard emotion. The only thing to me that seems to make a difference is to hold that emotion in community, and in collective—to surrender to it and then rise back into shaping the future that we want.

This conversation was edited for clarity and length.

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Mandatory Maternity

Never mind abortion—the Trump administration is going after your birth control

By Summer Brennan

It's hard to remember how rosy the future of birth control in America looked only five years ago. Access was expanding, thanks to the Affordable Care Act, and technology promised choices that were easier and cheaper, had fewer drawbacks, and would finally place more responsibility on men. The day seemed near when, finally, every pregnancy would be a wanted one.

Instead, now that Donald Trump is president, science is suspect, and the future of birth control looks more like *The Handmaid's Tale* than *Scientific American*. Beyond the many threats to abortion rights in the United States, the simple practice of seeking to prevent pregnancy through medical means is now under attack. If you thought the fight for birth control was a relic of the distant past—when a woman needed her husband's approval to get a checkbook let alone a prescription for the pill—think again.

Contraception is not a modern phenomenon. It's

one of humanity's oldest technologies and has existed in nearly all societies since before the days of settled agriculture. The arguments against it are also age-old: In the early 20th century, American family-planning pioneer Margaret Sanger had to battle 19th-century obscenity laws rooted in religious objections to sex, and President Theodore Roosevelt said that white women using contraceptives were committing "race suicide." Under Trump, both arguments are making a comeback on the national stage.

Almost immediately after his January 2017 inauguration, Trump set about filling his administration with people who were openly hostile to birth control. Katy Talento, for example, a health-policy adviser for the Trump-Pence campaign who advocated for eliminating contraception coverage from the Affordable Care Act, was appointed to the White House Domestic Policy Council. Talento had falsely claimed that the pill could cause "miscarriages of already conceived

children” and that “the longer you stay on the pill, the more likely you are to ruin your uterus for baby hosting.” (Her conflation of contraceptives with abortifacients is a common one in anti-birth-control circles, but it’s false, since the pill generally works by preventing ovulation altogether. Talento resigned her position in June 2019.)

“Women don’t care about contraception,” Trump’s first UN ambassador, former South Carolina governor Nikki Haley, told hosts on *The View*. “We don’t want government to mandate when we have to have it and when we don’t.” Under her leadership, in March 2017 the US stopped contributing to the United Nations Population Fund, the largest global supplier of contraceptives and reproductive services. Also under Haley, the United States named Valerie Huber to the UN Commission on the Status of Women. Huber, a longtime advocate of abstinence until marriage, is a proponent of “natural” family planning—in other words, the rhythm method.

In May 2017, Trump placed antiabortion activist Teresa Manning in charge of the Department of Health and Human Services’ Title X family-planning programs. One might assume that those who want to limit abortions would be staunch advocates for birth control, but that is often not the case. In fact, Manning opposes the use of birth control and told NPR (falsely) that “contraception doesn’t work.”

In September 2017, the department released a draft plan “protecting Americans at every stage of life, beginning at conception.” While not legally binding, it was nevertheless intended to guide federal policy regarding, for example, the morning-after pill, which Manning has claimed results in “the destruction of a human life already conceived.” Under her guidance, Health and Human Services increased its support for abstinence-based sex education, even though at least one comprehensive study had shown that such programs “are not effective in delaying initiation of sexual intercourse.” Manning resigned in early 2018 and was replaced by Valerie Huber.

Hostility to contraception has also been a hallmark of Trump’s judicial appointments. As an appeals court judge, Neil Gorsuch, Trump’s first nominee to a seat on the Supreme Court, supported Utah governor Gary Herbert’s defunding of Planned Parenthood in Utah. On the US Court of Appeals, he twice sided with efforts to remove access to contraceptives from health plans under the Affordable Care Act, arguing that coverage violated the religious freedom of those opposed to reproductive rights.

In addition to Justice Gorsuch, other lifetime appointments to the federal courts in the first year of the Trump administration included L. Steven Gras, who believes that fertilized eggs have “personhood” rights even before implanting in the

uterus; Kyle Duncan, who represented Hobby Lobby in its successful effort to get the Supreme Court to affirm its right to deny birth control coverage to employees; and Amy Coney Barrett, who signed a petition calling birth control coverage “a grave violation of religious freedom.” Another nomination (later withdrawn) was Jeff Mateer, who linked the contraceptive mandate under Obamacare to Nazi Germany.

Appeals to religious freedom play a crucial role in efforts to limit women’s reproductive freedom. Many of those opposed to birth control are also opposed to all sex that is not intended to result in a pregnancy, even when it’s between married, heterosexual adults—the only kind of couple that most anti-contraception organizations, like the Catholic church, approve of. In the Trump administration, the religious freedom of people who see sex solely as a necessary evil in the service of procreation is deemed more important than the religious freedom of the majority of people—be they Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, or atheist—who believe otherwise.

Christianity has long cast a suspicious eye on sexual pleasure. Puritanical beliefs, combined with anxieties over women’s liberation, gave rise to the anti-contraceptive Comstock Laws, passed between the 1870s and 1920s. When the laws were struck down by the 1965 Supreme Court ruling in *Griswold v. Connecticut*, the decision hinged on a right to “marital privacy,” found by Justice William O. Douglas within the Bill of Rights. (The right to birth control was not extended to unmarried people until 1972, just one year prior to *Roe v. Wade*.)

Griswold directly contributed to the feminist achievements of the past 50 years, especially the rising levels of female representation in government. Even with that boost, women and nonbinary people still make up less than a quarter of Congress. More men are in Congress right now than all the women who have ever served. Trump’s actions take us in the opposite direction: Cutting access to birth control and other reproductive medicine is an effective way to systematically disadvantage women and keep them out of the halls of power.

Jenny Brown, author of the book *Birth Strike: The Hidden Fight Over Women’s Work*, shows that while countries like France have made it easier for working women to be mothers—with generous paid family leave and ample childcare, among other things—the United States has gone toward a de facto policy of enforcing maternity by making birth control and abortion increasingly difficult to access. This is compounded by government insistence on abstinence-only sex education policies, which leave young people in the dark about reproductive options and girls more likely to end up pregnant.

Before the Industrial Revolution, arguments against birth

Declaring every fertilized egg, zygote,
and fetus a person opens up a Pandora’s box
of Atwoodian consequences.

The future of birth control looks more like *The Handmaid's Tale* than *Scientific American*.

control mainly focused on the desire to increase the population. With high rates of infant mortality, women were expected to do their duty for the community by having as many babies as possible. But in recent decades, opponents of birth control have shifted their arguments from the practical to the moral. When Sandra Fluke, a married law student at Georgetown, spoke at a 2012 congressional hearing about the financial hardship she suffered when birth control was not covered by the Catholic university, conservative radio host Rush Limbaugh responded by calling her a slut and a prostitute. Her demand for birth control coverage, Limbaugh said, was akin to “wanting to be paid for sex.”

Regulating birth control has always been a way to control women's desires. The decision to limit the number of one's children has often been linked to “selfish” goals like professional gain, academic success, creative achievement, or—heaven forbid—adventure. Of course, these aims are considered selfish only when embraced by women. Otherwise they are simply things that men routinely enjoy—and consider it their right to pursue—thanks, in many cases, to women's free labor in the home, taking care of the children.

CONTRACEPTION AND ABORTION often overlap in the minds of those who oppose them—some believe they amount to the same thing, even though they are wildly different. Medically, a pregnancy begins with an egg's implantation in the wall of the uterus, which usually takes place one to two weeks after sperm has been introduced. Some birth control opponents reckon that pregnancy starts at fertilization—and want to grant personhood to that egg.

Declaring every fertilized egg, zygote, and fetus a person opens up a Pandora's box of Atwoodian consequences. Take the case of 27-year-old Marshae Jones of Alabama. In December 2018, she was five months pregnant when another woman shot her in the stomach. Although Jones survived the attack, she miscarried. While charges against the shooter were dropped, Jones herself was arrested and charged with the manslaughter of her own fetus, because police claimed she had initiated the argument that led to the shooting and had therefore endangered her child's life. Charges against Jones were ultimately dropped, but not before raising a chilling notion: If a pregnant woman can be charged with manslaughter for being the victim of a shooting, what else might she be blamed for?

As many as half of all early pregnancies end in miscarriage, often for reasons that can never be determined. Many miscarriages occur before a woman even knows that she is pregnant. If the Health and Human Services' draft plan becomes official, and personhood is legally defined as starting at conception, even these early pregnancy losses would—at least theoretically—be considered deaths and have to be

investigated. In addition to the usual worries and fears, every pregnant woman would potentially have a 50 percent chance of being investigated for murder.

When high-ranking government appointees like Talento falsely claim that using contraceptives can cause miscarriages and that a miscarriage is a death, it follows that birth control could be criminalized, as could many actions taken by a pregnant or potentially pregnant woman. Alabama's Human Life Protection Act, enacted in May 2019, makes abortion a Class A felony—the same as rape and murder. A bill proposed in Texas would potentially impose the death penalty on women who receive abortions. If we go down this road, it may not be long before all women of childbearing age are considered “prepregnant,” their every action (or inaction) judged based on the hypothetical consequences for hypothetical children.

On top of representing a potentially catastrophic threat to the freedom and autonomy of women, anti-birth-control activism also smacks of the racism inherent in President Roosevelt's “race suicide” remark. In July 2019, Arizona Republican state senator Sylvia Allen worried about the “browning of America,” because white people “are not reproducing ourselves with birth rates.” At its most extreme, this fear leads to the “replacement theory” cited by the white supremacist charged with the New Zealand mosque shootings and the neo-Nazis in Charlottesville, Virginia: that falling white birth rates will result in the replacement of white people. As a *New York Times* story on the subject noted, “Like so many fundamentalist ideologies, the foundation of this one requires the subjugation of women.”

In February 2019, that subjugation kicked up a notch. In a national version of the “global gag rule” (see “Choke Hold on Contraception,” page 18), the Trump administration demanded that Planned Parenthood cease referring women to abortion providers or forfeit the \$60 million a year it receives through Title X for birth control and other reproductive services for 1.5 million poor women.

“We refuse to cower to the Trump-Pence administration,” said Alexis McGill Johnson, Planned Parenthood's acting president and CEO. “This gag rule could mean that we will see women driving hundreds of miles just to find a provider who can help them access birth control such as an IUD.” Title X funds will continue to flow, however, to antiabortion-counseling organizations like Obria. “Do you know what Obria does not provide?” McGill Johnson asked.

“Contraception.”

The Handmaid's Tale is no longer just on your television. ■

SUMMER BRENNAN is a journalist and author based in Brooklyn.

This article was funded by the Sierra Club's Gender, Equity, and Environment program (sierraclub.org/gender).

"They have ambitions now," Khadijah says. "Some of them want to become doctors, some teachers. They have hope for their future."

Today's lesson is mostly a review of reproductive health—hence, Habiba's call-and-response. "How do you know when you are pregnant?" Khadijah asks. "Once you are pregnant, when should you go to the clinic?" The girls talk over one another to answer.

CGE's safe space curriculum includes a field trip to a medical clinic. For many students, it's the first time they've been to one. Sometimes this is because the nearest clinic is far from where they live. Their families' low social status can also interfere. "When they go to the hospital, they don't feel very confident with the workers, so they don't get what they want," Khadijah says. On the field trip, the girls talk to nurses, doctors, and women who have just given birth. "Some of [the students] are very shy to the doctor during that visit," Khadijah

says, "but some of them are confident. They ask questions."

Operating in a religiously conservative area, CGE does not explicitly teach family planning. Nonetheless, the girls who take part in the safe spaces are more likely to use birth control than those who don't, partly because of the greater exposure to information they receive in school.

In their study, Kwauk and Braga also argue that higher levels of education are associated with strong measures of agency—or, "the ability to make decisions about one's life and act on them to achieve a desired outcome, free of violence, retribution, or fear." For this reason, girls' education complements family-planning services, which on their own aren't always effective.

Despite the efforts of CGE and other organizations working to advance girls' education, fewer than one in three girls in sub-Saharan Africa attends secondary school. Advocates say that if some climate-adaptation funds—which are often focused on expensive, highly

technical solutions—were delivered to organizations that educate girls, this low-tech, equity-focused response to climate change could rapidly scale up.

But for Perlman, Mohammed, and others at CGE, that isn't really the point. Their work is, above all, about fostering female agency. The center has flipped the script that usually accompanies Western-led aid and development programs in poorer nations. Female education isn't an instrument to some other goal—it is the goal, with the broader environment representing a kind of co-benefit. And this is exactly why it works.

"Something has really taken place to make people better," Mohammed says, "and it is helping more girls to be able to have the support of their parents to allow them to continue schooling and to really achieve something with their life." ■

WENDY BECKTOLD is Sierra's senior story editor.

This article was funded by the Sierra Club's Gender, Equity, and the Environment program (sierraclub.org/gender).

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SIERRA CLUB FINANCIAL REPORT

TREASURER'S LETTER

I am pleased to present the accompanying Sierra Club Financial Report for the years ending December 31, 2018, and December 31, 2017. The complete audited financial statement and independent auditor's report are available at sc.org/financials. These year-end reports include the financial position of our 63 volunteer-managed chapters and their 360 groups.

For the year ending December 31, 2018, total revenues of the Sierra Club were \$153,034,700, total operating expenses were \$154,979,600, and non-operating expenses were \$7,512,400. Membership dues totaled \$25,244,600, and public contributions and grants totaled \$108,976,900, including contributions from

nearly 100,000 monthly Wilderness Guardian donors (December 2018).

Support from the Sierra Club's 784,250 members and close to 4 million champions (July 2019) makes possible the effectiveness and success of our campaigns, including Clean Energy for All and Our Wild America, as well as our respected Environmental Law Program, Outings, and chapter activities. Your donations help us build the broad, diverse movement we need if we are to meet the challenges we face.

Thank you,
David Scott, Treasurer

AN ANNUAL REPORT

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2017		LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS	
		2018	2017
34,388,900	Accounts payable	\$ 7,249,600	5,885,000
17,549,700	Accrued expenses	9,059,600	8,182,200
	Deferred revenue	2,568,800	2,401,500
390,600	Deferred lease liability	5,071,300	5,538,700
8,556,700	Pension liability	13,269,800	6,108,400
5,562,300			
85,800	Total liabilities	37,219,100	28,115,800
3,814,100	Net assets:		
220,700	Without donor restrictions:		
31,033,700	Undesignated	33,989,000	41,916,600
6,786,800	Board-designated	4,672,200	3,253,200
30,000	Total without donor restrictions	38,661,200	45,169,800
108,419,300	With donor restrictions:		
	Life memberships	27,282,800	26,266,100
	General	4,480,000	8,445,400
	Other activities	422,200	422,200
	Total with donor restrictions	32,185,000	35,133,700
	Total net assets	70,846,200	80,303,500
	Total liabilities and net assets	\$ 108,065,300	108,419,300

December 31, 2018 and 2017

2018		2017	
With donor restrictions	Total	Without donor restrictions	Total
—	23,825,500	26,429,600	26,429,600
1,016,700	1,419,100	12,800	1,302,200
85,271,100	108,976,900	27,684,300	99,787,600
—	9,589,700	8,742,300	8,742,300
—	1,581,100	1,856,800	1,856,800
—	234,300	323,300	323,300
(1,748,100)	(1,894,400)	3,078,300	6,156,000
—	1,604,800	1,904,000	1,904,000
—	697,700	2,491,400	2,491,400
—	7,000,000	6,400,000	6,400,000
84,539,700	153,034,700	78,922,800	155,393,200
(87,488,400)	—	73,879,800	(73,879,800)
(2,948,700)	153,034,700	152,802,600	155,393,200
—	73,412,400	61,205,800	61,205,800
—	25,984,100	22,830,300	22,830,300
—	9,770,700	9,129,400	9,129,400
—	1,364,300	881,700	881,700
—	110,531,500	94,047,200	94,047,200
—	7,719,600	6,968,000	6,968,000
—	23,417,900	23,210,000	23,210,000
—	7,303,400	6,780,000	6,780,000
—	6,007,200	5,924,200	5,924,200
—	44,448,100	42,882,200	42,882,200
—	154,979,600	136,929,400	136,929,400
—	1,500	3,300	3,300
—	7,510,900	635,000	635,000
—	162,492,000	137,567,700	137,567,700
(2,948,700)	(9,457,300)	15,234,900	17,825,500
35,133,700	80,303,500	29,934,900	62,478,000
32,185,000	70,846,200	45,169,800	80,303,500

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KAYAKERS IN PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND, ALASKA
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want to invest in my own well-being and that of my surroundings, regardless of who might depend on me. But after a few weeks of her prompts and meditations—exercises that have me sketching family trees, examining my parents' and grandparents' relationships to procreation, and, yes, writing pep-talk letters to my former child self—I surprise myself with moments of physical, unfettered yearning to have a kid. Overall, I'm still hot and cold on the question, but I've grown wary of tethering my decision to politics.

I may well opt not to rocket my DNA forward, but the more I think about it, resisting that drive feels tantamount to believing that doom is inevitable. "Existential suicide" may sound dramatic, but letting the climate dictate decisions about my uterus increasingly feels like a sign that I've acclimated to a dreary future, that I've stopped trying, that I might as well fall off a mountain, so to speak.

Even Blythe Pepino says she'll give herself five years to make a final decision; the self-described "gloom-and-doom type" still thinks power structures could change by the time she's 38. The original BirthStriker's greatest hope lies with the Greta Thunbergs of the world—the "pissed-off youths aged 16 to 20" who are holding school strikes and storming their governments over climate inaction. "They haven't built their lives around a different reality," she says. "They're on it, and they'll put much different people in power."

I might give myself a similar time frame. "What you want and what you decide often aren't the same thing," Davidman says when I tell her this. "So what's your gut reaction? Do you want to be a mom?"

I consider all the irrationality and inaction presently pushing humanity toward catastrophe. *We're just gonna have to figure it out*, I think. Then I answer, "Yes."

"And do you also wish you could lead a child-free life and have that be OK?"

"Yes," I say, picturing myself filling my free time lobbying for climate legislation and creating art about it, à la Blythe Pepino.

"And you could see yourself down either path if you knew it was *your* truth?"

"Yes," I say, though I can't deny at this point that I want the child-free life just a little bit less.

One thing has become clear: If I remain childless based on a cesspool-like image in my head of what my unborn kid's home planet will look like, I'm essentially assuming the role of a fear-aggressive dog. And just as I take pride in training those tendencies out of Maeve and making her a happier, better canine citizen, I'm looking forward to helping my own hypothetical kid make the most of their time on the beautiful, ephemeral Earth they've inherited—whatever it happens to look like. ■

KATIE O'REILLY is Sierra's *adventure and lifestyle editor*.



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The Accidental Spokesperson

Name: Tasnim Mellouli

Location: Orlando, Florida

Contribution: Fellow with the Sierra Club's Gender, Equity, and Environment program

HOW DID YOU LEARN ABOUT THE GENDER, EQUITY, AND ENVIRONMENT FELLOWSHIP? In summer 2016, I was a climate justice intern with Organize Florida. My supervisor there told me about it. I was accepted and got to attend a weekend-long training in DC the following June about the intersectionality of gender and climate change. One point that stuck out to me was that women tend to face the brunt of climate change. It's harder for them to bounce back from disasters.

THE FELLOWSHIP OFTEN INCLUDES A SPECIAL PROJECT. DID YOU DO ONE? I'm still thinking about what to do. I really want to write a children's book for Muslim kids. Our faith community isn't very active in climate justice. I think it's because we have other problems to deal with, like discrimination, but I want to highlight that we should be on the front lines of this.

HOW DID YOU BECOME AN ENVIRONMENTALIST? I have always loved trees and wanted to protect them. I'd watch movies like *WALL-E*—where the whole earth is filled with trash—and I was the one kid who was like, "Oh my gosh, we have to do something!" If I see that movie today, I still get upset.

WHEN DID YOU FIRST BECOME AWARE OF CLIMATE CHANGE? We immigrated to Orlando when I was five, but most of my family is in Tunisia. Half the country is desert, and the other half is mountains. And it's coastal too. When we'd go back to visit, we'd see the effects of climate change. It's really hot, which is hard on the elderly and babies. I see the effects of climate change here in Florida too, of course, just going to the beach—the shoreline is higher than what I experienced as a kid.

YOU'RE A STUDENT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA. WHAT'S YOUR MAJOR? Environmental studies. I really love wetlands—I've been doing research on wrack, which is a kind of seagrass that washes up onshore. Last year and this year, I went to the Society of Wetland Scientists conference and took part in discussions about how we can diversify wetland sciences and science in general. In my experience, the science community is pretty accepting, but I'm always the only Muslim woman, the only one wearing a hijab.

WHAT'S THAT LIKE? Growing up, because I was visibly Muslim, I always got a lot of questions about 9/11 and the current state of the world. I'm actually kind of a shy person, but I became not shy because I was put in a position where I had to speak up. I welcomed the questions, though, because I could at least answer them more correctly than if people just looked online. It's a big role that a lot of young Muslims have to take on, whether we want to or not. I played sports too. You definitely didn't see many hijabs there. People were always like, "Oh, you can run and stuff?" Yeah, I can! —*interview by Wendy Becktold*

Pilgrimage

BY JACKIE BRYANT

We've been hiking for a half hour when we see the SUV driving across the sand in our direction. We are not surprised that we've been seen. Our group of 12 hikers is the tallest thing around that isn't a cactus.

The SUV pulls up alongside us. "What are you doing?" says the Border Patrol officer inside.

"Hi, sir," says one of the volunteers leading us. "We're just a group of friends on a day hike."

"What's with the water jugs?" says the officer. Each of us is carrying a gallon of water. Some are carrying two. "You wouldn't be doing anything special with those, would you?"

"It's 97 degrees, sir," says our group leader.

The officer smiles, but it's not friendly. He doesn't believe us. But we're on public land. There's not much he can do, for now.

He asks to see our identification. We open our packs and begin digging. Before we can pull out our IDs, he abruptly speeds away, kicking up a plume of dust that leaves us all coughing. "Hope you guys have a nice day," he shouts sarcastically.

We start walking again, slipping in the soft sand.

When I met up with the Border Angels this morning, we separated into groups according to hiking ability. I joined the most experienced group. I recently spent a month hiking the Camino de Santiago across Spain. But walking with no trail is brutal. A few hikers have already turned back.

Border Angels is a nonprofit, run by volunteers, that has provided legal aid and education to immigrants in San Diego since the 1980s. For the past two decades, it has also left caches of water in the Sonoran Desert for migrants crossing it. Last year, at least 283 people died trying to cross the borderlands between the United States and Mexico, mostly from dehydration. The actual number of deaths could be higher—not all bodies are

discovered or reported to the Border Patrol.

We reach a wall that is more like a pile of boulders and begin to scramble up. More hikers turn back. Many first-timers don't ever return, one of the guides tells me. The ones who don't quit aren't necessarily the most athletic but have the strongest belief in what they're doing. I wasn't expecting this to be like the Camino, but it feels like a pilgrimage. Everyone wants to tell you why they're here.

Soon, we're inside a canyon. Signs of human activity are everywhere—empty water jugs, a shelter made of a tarp stretched across two boulders. It's difficult to say how recently people have been here. The sound of distant gunshots ricochets off the walls. BLM land is a popular spot for day-trippers to drink and shoot guns, but the sound makes everyone tense. We boulder our way through, leaving water jugs and bags filled with food, clothing, and emergency supplies as we go.

If the Border Patrol find these supplies after we leave, they might destroy them. But migrants and asylum seekers try to cross over on terrain where the Border Patrol can't drive. It's likely they'll find these supplies, at a time when the food and water could mean the difference between life and death.

As people set down their jugs, some write messages on them. I think for a minute and then write "Bienvenidos."

We reach the top of the canyon. In the distance, I can see the watchtowers and the white surveillance blimps flown by the Border Patrol. I can see the campers who are shooting guns and the distant glitter of the Salton Sea. I can see a smudge in the distance that must be a city in Baja California. There is no fence at this point, which sits at the junction between the United States and Mexico. It's impossible to tell where one ends and the other begins.

JACKIE BRYANT is a writer based in San Diego.

I think for a minute and then write "Bienvenidos."



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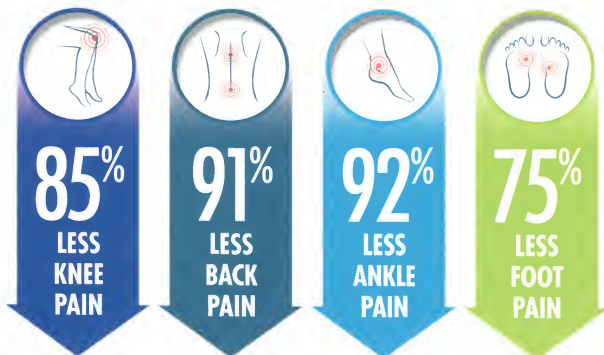
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